

# SAGITTARIUS EYE



ISSUE **8**  
APRIL 3304

**CRIME IN 3304**  
A FAIR FIGHT:  
**COMBAT ON  
THE RIGHT SIDE  
OF THE LAW**

**PIRATING WITH STYLE:  
FLYING  
WITH THE  
SCREAMING  
EAGLES**



**ALSO FEATURING: INRA, THARGONS, POLARIS, COLONIA AND MORE...**

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# EDITORIAL

Souvarine



Three years ago this May, the then President of the Galactic Federation climbed on board a spaceship called Starship One, took off and disappeared. Jasmina Halsey turned up again almost a year later, after a massive search and rescue effort across a vast area of space following the mechanical failure of the ship's jump drive. She spent two months convalescing in a hospital; then got up, warbled nonsensically on Galactic media, and was promptly ushered away into State care.

We're told she now 'advises' jolly Edmund Mahon, though the calibre of the political counsel dispensed from her padded cell is for our readers to decide.

One of the comments she made during her brief time in front of the cameras following her return piqued this observer's interest. Halsey claimed to have met "the real caretakers of our galaxy", who were apparently "tiny yet gargantuan, fleeting yet eternal".

We would like to take an unorthodox flight of whimsy, if we may, and humour Ms Halsey.

Suppose, for a moment, that we are not cosmic accidents scurrying meaninglessly amid a firmament that doesn't even register our existence. Suppose that unseen "caretakers" do regulate and direct our lives and the movements of the constellations. Such entities would no doubt control everything about our Galaxy, from the speed at which the planets move to the price of fish.

Suppose there was design behind the evolution of the current conflict. For months following the excitable Kahina Loren's revelation (that yep, those eight-limbed alien terrors are Thargoids alright - thanks Kahina), the 'Thargoid threat' existed primarily to travellers dropping into clearly-identified signal sources in a star cluster half an hour away. And even then, they weren't all that threatening unless you just about rammed into them.

However, since those pedestrian days you would have to concede that current affairs have become both more deadly *and* more interesting. It feels like everyone with a starship and a day off can pootle over to the Pleiades to personally help fix damaged starports or decipher the Octagonal Menace's next targets.

From a distance, our predicament might look two-dimensional. Plucky humans pulling together to thwart those dastardly and conveniently-ugly bugs. But look closer and the picture is muddier.

I don't mean those bivalves still trying to claim that the Thargoids are actually our friends, and if you wipe the human blood and starship wreckage from their faces you'd reveal a gentle, magnanimous smile. I mean the gnarly, multi-hued conundrums which repeatedly confound our attempts to morally simplify them.

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## Heroes or monsters, all?

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Accepted wisdom is that INRA were genocidal, unaccountable monsters. But as our thoughtful piece this month shows, their egregious crimes probably saved our entire species.

The heroes currently working to identify and defend the next systems on the aliens' hit lists, being faced with what appears to be mutually-exclusive options of which to save—flippantly condemning entire populations to burn, according to the brutal mathematics of utilitarianism.

Or John Jameson, covered in a previous issue, who cheerfully shot a giant bomb into the central Thargoid hive and seemed surprised when it didn't have the most beneficial effects on their health.

And Thargoids aside, where is the line between gentlemanly redistribution and parasitical, murderous piracy? One of our intrepid reporters, embedded this month with a pirate band, finds himself extolling their nobility and camaraderie whilst watching them commit murder.

Heroes or monsters, all?

Peer closely, and we discover that our Galaxy reliably defies easy labelling. Life is always muddier than moralists would have us believe—seemingly now more than ever.

*Sagittarius Eye* will continue to hold the torch for informed, evidence-driven enquiry in the face of a complex Galaxy.

And if Halsey were right—if "unseen caretakers" were indeed setting this morally-nuanced landscape up for us to navigate—this magazine would have to tip our hats to them, for denying us any easy answers.

## writers



### Souvarine

Souvarine is an experienced field reporter. He writes about current affairs, galactic politics and discovery. His Sidewinder-class press ship, the *Salty Weasel*, can often be spotted in the heat of the action, ferreting out the story.

### Wilfrid Sephiroth

Wilfrid is a jaded spacer seeking to uncover the false 'awesome' for the mundane it really is, and the interesting kernel of the seemingly-trivial. In his Asp Explorer, the *A.E. Van Vogt*, usually the Big Story finds him first.



### Louis Calvert

Not disciplined enough for a career in the Sciences and not dedicated enough for a career in Law Enforcement, Louis' only recourse was to become a journalist. He can be found chasing a story in his battered Cobra, the *Hot Needle of Inquiry*.

### Whitmann

Whitmann is uncomfortable in the third person. Exploration, nebulae naming, deep canyon driving, random encounters with random strangers, Viper IV *Zopherus*, eclipses, close rings, Ochoeng Chillies.



### Mini\_Watto

A qualified astrophysicist, combat pilot and member of Paradigm, Mini can usually be found in San Tu duelling with pilots from all walks of life. He aims to pass on some of his knowledge to readers and increase the popularity of modern combat.

### DrNoesis

Dr Noesis is driven by the need to understand the universe around him and to share what he finds with others, from the physics of witchspace to the best temperature to brew your coffee. Flying his DBX, *Fiat Cibus*, his destination is knowledge.



### Michael Darkmoor

Born to a family of explorers, Michael's wanderlust has kept him moving throughout a number of careers as well as all corners of the Milky Way. In the Bubble, you may find him flying around in an Ebony Python named *Icy Nothing*.

## photographers

### Zack J White

After graduating in 3300 Zack explored unknown systems before taking up a position as scientific officer for the Alliance. Since then he has been studying the Guardians, the Thargoids biology and working with the Tethys Empire Crew.



### Edelgard von Rhein

An explorer and Buckyball racer, Edelgard seldom remains in one place for long. She has a keen interest in the search for life and contributes frequently to the Galactic Mapping Project, and research into the Formidine Rift and Thargoids.

### Icarus Maru

Icarus has always had a lust for travel. As soon as he was able, he headed for the stars. Working as a freelance pilot in his trusty DBX, the *Snickler Defender*, he does whatever it takes to get both sides of the story for SAGi.



## artists



### Ian Baristan

A cartographer and explorer, Ian tries to make amends for his past by promoting the arts. He's currently living as a hermit at Ishum's Reach for a long period of introspection, maintaining connection with humanity through SAGi.

### ToCoSo

Usually found near 7 Andromedae peering down at Earth-likes. Always looking for adventure, be it at a hazardous RES, a listening post or a distant nebula, he spends his time writing space music and making holo-dreamworlds.



### DanIRW

A common sight around the Pleiades ferrying cargo in his Keelback, DanIRW takes up his hobby of making artwork when on breaks during longer journeys and spats of exploration.

### Mat2596

A veteran explorer, researcher and designer, Mat2596 spends most of his time out in uncharted space. His ship of choice—the trusty Corvette *FNS Paladin Olympus*—can be often found flying around the Pleiades Nebula.



## designers



### LexMoloch

An Imperial agent of propaganda. Often a guest of mustachioed dictators at luxurious, over-the-top villas, hedonistically enjoying something expensive and usually illegal. Also a passionate nebulae explorer and gas giant photographer.

### McNicholl

A molecular bio-printed 'clone' of the original CMDR McNicholl with memory implants taken from the various incarnations he has had through the centuries. He has held a Pilot's Federation licence for over 250 years, and can still recall the thrill of his first launch in a new Cobra mk3 from Lave Station.



### Zaclobsterboy

\*transmission interrupted\*

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# TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Very few people ever believe they are the villain in the story of their life. The same can be said of any organization, government, or faction. In a prolonged war from the backwaters of the Galaxy, a conflict between two minor factions has become a mirror for our own natures.

The area around Colonia has seen a massive amount of infrastructure built during the last two years, with over fifty named systems inhabited since the intrepid cyborg Jaques tried, in mid-3302, to jump his station out to the far side of the galaxy.

He didn't make it, and the trip ended with the station misjumping to the Eol Prou Nebula. It was rediscovered in the summer of that year by an explorer curious as to why there was a service station out in the middle of nowhere showing up on GalMap.

By the end of 3302, after thousands of pilots flocked to the stricken vessel, Jaques was repaired. In the following months, many more stations and bases were built in the nebula, with the Colonia Citizens Network (CCN) growing to become the leading colonists' organisation in the region. The nebula was renamed 'Colonia', to reflect the hope for a new civilisation that the region came to represent.

## Rugged Individualism of the Colonists

The beginning of 3303 saw the number of factions increase dramatically as groups of colonists made the long journey to the Eol Prou Nebula. However, the populations in any single system remained constant, due to restrictions imposed on immigration by the Colonia Council, which emerged as the first governing body of the region.

In these early days, the resource-rich systems near the Nebula drove widespread economic development and led many of the factions to expand into adjacent systems.

As the first established group in the area around Jaques Station, CCN had de-facto control over the area. They offered the new colonists a complicated treaty with many clauses, designed to keep relations between groups amicable in Colonia. In this, all factions would have been required to voluntarily limit their expansions into other systems.

However, the distrust and disillusionment with big politics from within the Bubble was one of the main reasons the colonists had for leaving it. The vast majority of colonial factions saw CCN's stipulations as too restrictive, or designed to tighten CCN's own grip on power.

Not a single new faction signed the treaties. ▶



The GalCop Colonial Defence Commission (GCDC) and other local factions invited CCN to draw up a simpler, more cohesive version of the treaties. From this collaboration was born the Jaques Accord:

1. We will be excellent to each other.
2. We will not attempt to push another member group from control of their home system.
3. We will hold a discussion amongst all member groups before voting to add or expel a group. A majority must agree to act.
4. We will limit Personal Combat to conflict zones, defence, areas pre-announced, or pre-arranged combat.
5. We will maintain Jaques as the ruling faction of Jaques Station. Jaques station is off-limits to conflict.
6. We will aid others in need if asked, and as our time and resources allow. Humanity must endure.

The Colonia Expansion Initiative (CEI) was formed alongside the Accords as a method for all factions in the Eol Prou Nebula to regulate their conduct towards each other. Of the forty political groups in the region, twenty seven have made the commitment to develop their embassies at CEI. Several others have expressed interest at the time of this article.

No one has yet deserted the CEI permanently. It is the one place in the sector where governments can communicate with each other to resolve issues.

### The Trouble... With Us

Cmdr Rax Minerva, a leader of the GCDC (which also maintains the Jaques Accord), said:

*"The best treaties and coalitions work when there is mutual respect between all members."*

However, the disparity between the size and resources of the signatory groups can create problems. Some groups, in Cmdr Minerva's opinion, "... do not view it as their responsibility to keep their own influence under control", and see the task of minimising their citizens' expansion into other systems as the responsibility of the faction in control of the system they expand into. However, the most sprawling factions are necessarily the largest—so smaller groups with fewer resources are at the mercy of those larger factions.



### MCRN

Mobius Colonial Republic Navy is an Independent Democracy and a sub-component of the Order of Mobius.

Stated goals: 'to see MCRN thrive in the Colonia Region, keep good relations with the neighbouring political factions (where possible), and have a great time doing it.'

They are present in twelve of the 56 named systems, owning five: Alberta, Desy, Hamlet's Harmony, Pytheas and Mobia, their home system.

# VS

### PAEX

The Privateer's Alliance (PA) Expeditionary Force is an Independent Confederacy and the Colonia arm of the Privateers' Alliance.

PA follows a loose set of five guidelines that permit members careers in piracy, personal combat, and mercenary work along with the more mundane occupations like racing, trading and exploration, in return for supporting and defending the home system when called upon.

They are present in eight of the 56 named systems, owning one - Kioti 368.

They are also present in Alberta, Desy, Dubbuennel, Mobia, Pytheas, Rodentia and Valac.



## PRIVATEERS ALLIANCE

The Privateer's Alliance Expeditionary Force (PAEX) and Mobius Colonial Republic Navy (MCRN) came to the Eol Prou Nebula in March 3303 on the very same galactic transport. In fact, they are neighbours, having home systems a mere 4.18ly from one another. Early on, the two groups hit it off as allies. Despite the apparent differences in ethos and political approach, one could even say that they grew up together in those volatile economic conditions surrounding the region.

As the Accord was being developed, MCRN had reservations about the provisions made around personal combat, but allowed that their members could choose how they interpreted them. PAEX had issues with the same requirements, but for different reasons—they believed that the limits placed on where and when personal combat might occur were not something they could prescribe or enforce on their members.

In the end, MCRN signed the treaty. PAEX did not.

**“ Were it a criminal offense, instead of human nature, both factions could be repeatedly charged for the aggressions they have demonstrated in Colonia. ”**

There are differing accounts of how the war between them started. According to representatives of PAEX, it was during a bitter attack on their home system of Kioti 386 by unaffiliated freelancers, during which PAEX called to their allies for help. In the months leading up to these raids, PAEX had expanded into the Alberta system, intending to eventually take it over and expand from there into a more open area of the nebula once the entire region stabilized.

Their allies standing beside them, PAEX expected a swift victory over the raiders. However, a swift victory didn't materialise. During the months it took to finally regain security and control over their home, they grew frustrated and suspicious at their allies' perceived inactivity—principally, that of the MCRN. They did not, however, immediately voice their concerns—or their future plans for the Alberta system.

During this period, MCRN also happened to expand into Alberta. They saw an opportunity and, before the final week of battle in Kioti 386 was even complete, had claimed Alberta as their own.

The reaction from PAEX was 'very undiplomatic', according to one ambassador.

MCRN mistakenly assumed that PAEX, having been in the system for several months, was not interested in taking control of it. The MCRN's purpose in this acquisition was to take over the shipyards in the Tir system, a little over 23ly away. In their mind, there was never a need to discuss plans or actions with their allies, or the wider CEI.

Meanwhile, PAEX formulated a plan to regain what they had become to think of as their system.

MCRN first became aware they were at war when, without warning or negotiation, PAEX attacked the Alberta system, taking it over in a matter of days.

Objective observers have commented that situations like these are difficult to avoid in the febrile economic climate of Colonia, given the huge impact relatively small groups of traders and agitators can have. But a quagmire of distrust has built up since the events, with every setback on either side blamed solely on the other.

Interestingly enough, documents provided by MCRN detail the entire affair and list several questionable actions on the part of both sides in the hostilities. These records show that, at many junctures, there have been opportunities to de-escalate hostility and open dialogue. Instead of using these, they became justifications in the continuing war.



Were it a criminal offense, instead of human nature, both factions could be repeatedly charged for the aggressions they have demonstrated in Colonia.

Victims of their aggression, like the small faction LGC Colonial Cartographers Guild, watch helplessly as their systems become battlegrounds.

Who can be said to have won the war?

In the strictest sense, MCRN achieved military victory, having gained four additional systems whilst containing PAEX around their home system of Kioti 386. They are however, themselves now bottled in with nowhere else to expand. The former goal of Tir and its extensive shipyards is no longer considered an easy target, and they still have their one-time brothers as an enemy resting in the very heart of their domain.

The lament of one MCRN pilot is instructive, as it could have come from either side:

*"We had to become just like them."*

On 25 February 3304, MCRN withdrew from the Jaques Accord.

**The human race is in the opening act of a much larger drama.**

### How the Circle Comes 'Round

The story of this little war may quickly and quietly fade into background radiation of history. In retrospect, however, the one thing that really began the conflict and kept it going for so long is not aggression, betrayal, jingoism or self-righteous anger—it was the failure to talk and listen to one another.

Trust and respect are siblings essential to any friendship—no less for governments. Even now, the human race is in the opening act of a much larger drama in which we currently have no such option to pursue. The opportunities that were there for MCRN and PAEX every step of the way—and that still exist today—are beyond our reach with the Thargoids.

Factions like the GalCop Colonial Defence Commission, Explorer's Nation, ICU Colonial Corps and others who have embassies in the CEI compound all occupy several systems in addition to their original home. Many of these groups still suffer from those same unintended economic effects felt by PAEX and MCRN occurring throughout the sector. The unpredictability of these system's economies are of great concern to all, but always as something to work out together, peacefully. They are neighbours and, at times, adversaries who would rather look for mutual benefit in diplomacy than waste time and valuable limited resources killing each other in costly, extended warfare. These are the true successes in the Eol Prou Nebula.

Colonia, for all its problems of low populations, vast distances, and extremely volatile economics, could be made a triumph by merely easing the restrictions imposed on immigration into currently-occupied systems. But, even without the stability new migration would bring, this experimental bastion is an opportunity to understand, in microcosm, what our species has become since we first departed that small, blue marble, so very long ago.

How simple, yet how devilishly difficult, is the fundamental premise of the Jaques Accord:

*"...Be Excellent to Each Other"*

### Trouble In Paradise

**Written by:** Michael Darkmoor

**Photography:** Michael Darkmoor, Craig Uchuu

**Page design:** McNicholl

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# A Ballet of Blades and Steel

As stations burn and acid clouds envelop derelict vessels spiralling their way into the abyss, enquiring minds have been quick to focus on the eight-petalled leviathans that assault us from the black.

However, for all the damage they can deal, the Thargoid vessels neither move nor strike alone. It is the smaller, often-overlooked craft that fly alongside them that present an equal threat.

The science team here at *Sagittarius Eye* feel that perhaps it is time we shone the light of enquiry onto this rarely considered threat, and faced the Thargons head on.

## Emergent Behaviour

In birds, the behaviour is termed 'murmuration'; in fish and other piscine species we call it 'shoaling' or 'bloomng', whilst in insect species it is almost always referred to as 'swarming'. It's a collective behaviour exhibited by several animal species, where individuals aggregate together in a large group and for a specific purpose.

It is very significant that the Thargons display a similar swarming behaviour; we at *Sagittarius Eye* consider this phenomenon to be worthy of study, in order to comprehend these creatures' behaviour and to devise methods to defend against them.

Swarming is considered an emergent behaviour resulting from discrete individual creatures following simple rules, requiring no central coordination. At its most basic, any number of creatures can exhibit a swarming behaviour by simply following three simple rules:

- Avoid moving too close to your neighbours;
- Move in the same average direction as your neighbours;
- Move towards the average position of your neighbours.

Life is rarely as simple as a mathematical simulation, and there is a point at which the swarm itself can be considered an organism in its own right. This is when the individual creatures that make up the swarm operate in a symbiotic feedback loop with it. Individual behaviour is driven by the swarm, the shape and evolution of which is driven by the biological imperatives and instincts of its constituent creatures.

## Strength in Numbers

One common point of note in swarm behaviour is that it is most often found in prey animals, particularly when the number of vulnerable individuals is significantly higher than the number of potential predators. This means that the biological need for individuals to survive is subsumed by the overarching imperative for the swarm—as a collective organism—to continue, allowing it to absorb damage and suffer the loss of individuals without a significant impact on the whole.

The most instructive example of this process in practice can be seen in large 'bait balls' of schooling fish, as observed in the oceans of numerous worlds. Within bait balls, individual fish are in constant motion, making them difficult to pick out, and the numbers of fish present render it statistically unlikely for any specific fish to be eaten.

Similarly, because of its size, it is unlikely that the entire bait ball can be consumed in one encounter, making its survival much more probable.

In Thargon swarms this means that even with the loss of several individual Thargons, the swarm itself can remain a potent threat.

The constant motion of the Thargons means that it is next to useless to target individuals, as the time taken to destroy an individual is asymmetrical to the minor impact it has on the whole swarm.

The volume of the swarm reduces the effectiveness of using explosive ordnance, like missiles or area-of-effect

weapons like flak cannons. The swarm takes up a larger volume than can be covered by the weapons' spread. Moreover, the Thargons can move and react to incoming ordnance far more rapidly than human-made missiles and torpedoes can compensate for, making them difficult to hit with self-propelled weapons.

That said, at the time of writing, flak weapons are reported to be the best means of defending against Thargon swarms, with many Commanders considering their use to be as effective as point defence or chaff systems in anti-xeno scenarios. In the Pleiades region, it is common to see privately owned and militia vessels sporting an array of turreted fragment or flak cannons, as well as remote flechette launchers for defensive purposes.

However, Thargoids have already demonstrated an ability to adapt to human tactics in battle. There is already clear evidence that more advanced Thargoids increase the spread between their Thargons in order to limit the effect of that sort of weaponry. There is a growing concern that, as they continue to learn, they may in time render all such weapons entirely ineffective.

### Death by a Thousand Cuts

As anyone who has ever had an encounter with a swarm of fire ants can tell you, whilst a individual creature with a small bite represents at worst a small irritation, a whole swarm of those same creatures can be an agonising experience.

Whilst a single, small, mobile energy weapons platform might not pose much of a threat to anyone, a swarm of tens of them can very quickly add up to enough firepower

to overwhelm the regenerative capacity of a ships' shields, or do significant damage to the internal systems of even the most well-armoured combat vessels.

From what we have been able to observe, an individual Thargon's weapon systems are fired in a fixed mode. They have a small fire arc which can only hit a target that is directly in front of it.

In human vessels, weapons of this nature can often lead to pilots jousting with each other as they line up an attack, head towards each other firing, then attempting to swing around for another pass.

But a Thargon swarm is not a single ship, and no individual Thargon's aim needs to be 'on target' at the same time as any other. So when operating independently of the Thargoids they travel with, the single Thargons tend to assume a rolling helix pattern—sometimes more than one, interlaced—within the swarm.

This has a twofold effect. Firstly, since swarm members are never flying all in the same direction, it means that the swarm itself is able to maneuver and change direction far more quickly than any single vessel. Secondly, since at any given moment no member of the swarm is ever flying in the same exact direction as another, the fire arcs of each individual member add cumulatively to the overall fire arc of the swarm, with each swarm member rolling into target acquisition, firing and then rolling out to be replaced by another.

The overall effect of this kind of helical swarm motion is to essentially create a large, rapid-fire, gimbaled weapon.

However, in order for the swarm to move at higher speeds, the transverse angle of the helical motion must be reduced, thus applying more velocity to the direction of travel and less to individuals rolling around the helix. This, in turn, reduces the effective fire arc of the swarm, as well as its maneuverability. In short—the faster the swarm travels, the tighter its firing arc. Some Commanders have reported being able to turn this into an advantage for themselves by luring the Thargons into chasing a remote controlled bait craft, and then attacking the swarm unmolested from the rear or flanks.

Conversely, the slower the swarm is moving in a given direction—making it easier for individual Thargons to engage in helical motion—the wider the swarm's fire arc becomes. In their resting state, Thargon swarms have been observed to take up a spiralling flight pattern around the main axis of their parent Thargoid, providing them with a near perfect 360° view and fire arc around the parent vessel.

### The Thargoid Factor

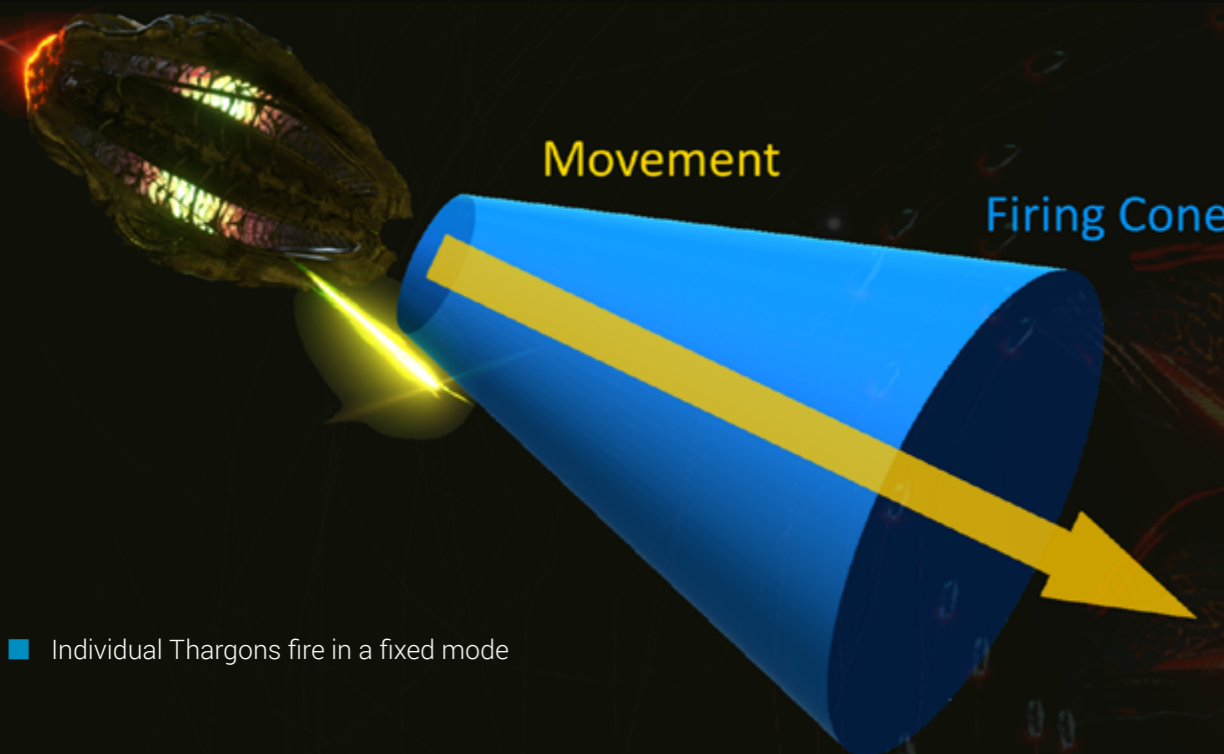
This resting state around the parent vessel highlights one of the most salient yet overlooked aspects of what is considered to be a Thargon swarm.

When we look at footage of the Thargons at rest, appearing to hang off the petals of a parent Thargoid, we are quick to assume there is some biological reason for this behaviour. Our mistake is to presume that it is an energy-saving strategy, similar to those seen in the formations of flying geese on Earth. In this scenario, a Thargoid petal would exert energy at the leading edge of the formation, allowing the Thargons to preserve their energy by moving in its wake.



Movement

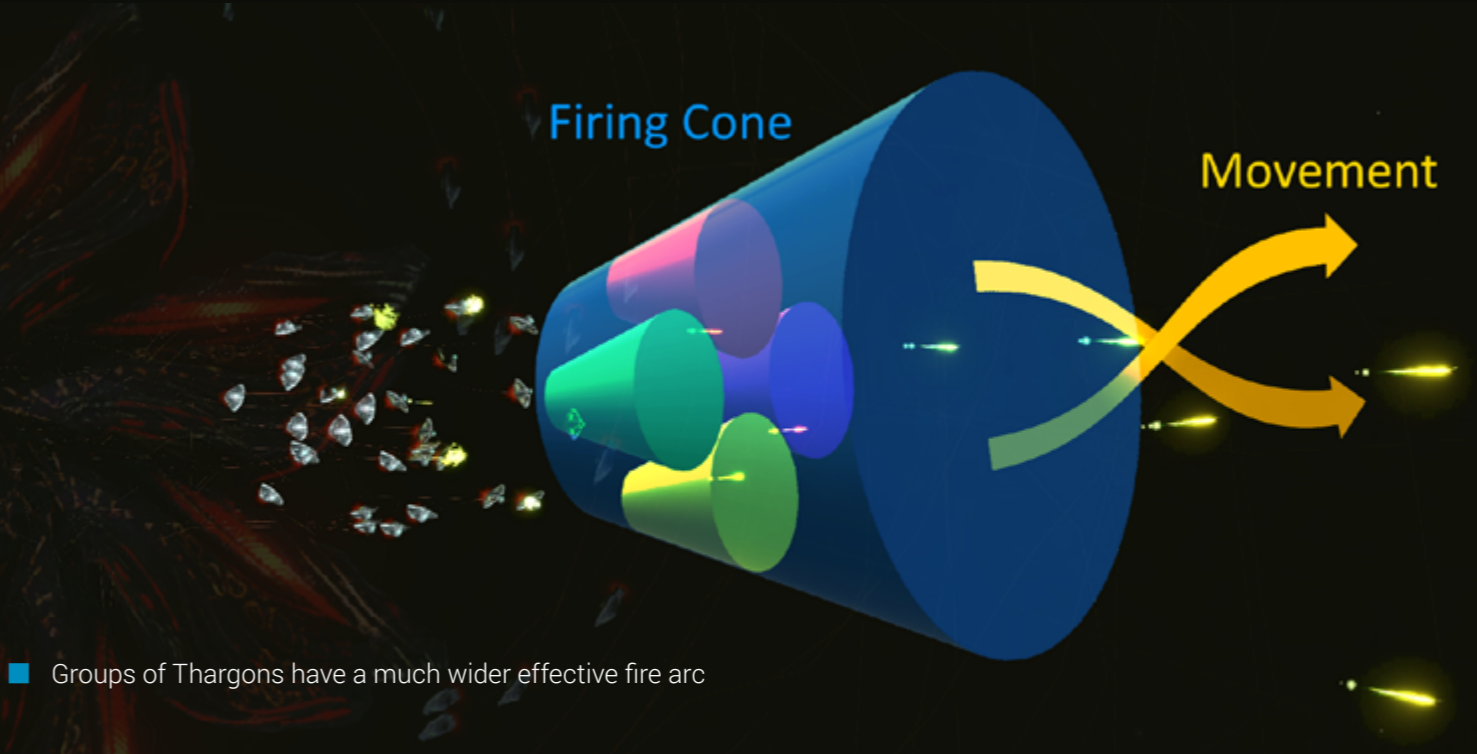
Firing Cone



■ Individual Thargons fire in a fixed mode

Firing Cone

Movement



■ Groups of Thargons have a much wider effective fire arc

There seems to be no discernible benefit to this leading-edge behaviour, as space is a vacuum. Therefore it would appear that the behaviour is due to the octal geometry of both the Thargoid and the swarm, and because the human brain tends to look for patterns. But this resting pattern, and the position of the parent Thargoid at the center of it, is much more suggestive of controlled or coordinated flight than it is of swarm behaviour.

Whether the Thargons were created by the Thargoids themselves, or are an independent species that the Thargoids have learned to control, is a mystery.

What we can say with reasonable certainty, however, is that the Thargoids exert some degree of control over the Thargon swarms that accompany them, and that the depth and sophistication of this control appears to depend on the class of the parent Thargoid vessel. In addition to being progressively more dangerous in themselves from Cyclops to Basilisk to Medusa variant, the patterns and spread of hosted Thargons have become progressively more advanced.

The most obvious example of this increase in sophistication can be noted in the difference in Thargon spread between those who are hosted by a Cyclops—where the swarm is held in a very tight formation around the host—and those hosted by the Medusa variant, where the spread is much more dispersed. This simple change in spread represents a highly effective countermeasure against incoming flak ordnance. A round impacting the center of a Cyclops' swarm would damage a large proportion of the swarm's individuals, whereas a similar round detonated in the same location for a Medusa's swarm would be lucky to damage more than one or two Thargons.

This has led to speculation that controlling the Thargon swarm places a significant load upon the processing abilities of the host, and may be related in some way to the number of 'hearts' a Thargoid vessel has. This speculation is reinforced by the observation that the movement and cohesion of a swarm appears to be reduced as the host takes damage, and can even be disrupted entirely for a few moments when extreme damage is inflicted on the Thargoid. The swarm transforms immediately from a perfectly choreographed symphony of death to a mess of discordant notes.

## The Mightiest Sword Cuts Both ways

The philosophies of Sun Tzu, Tacticus, Ip Man and Bruce Lee all remind us of the principle that the strength of an opponent can usually be turned upon itself.

It is reasonable to assume that the Thargoids control their Thargon swarms using psychic or electromagnetic communication, due to the disruption to the swarm that damage or distraction to the Thargoid creates. Close up footage of Thargon swarms at rest even seem to show a slow oscillation, like breathing, moving like a wave through the formation.

In combating the Thargoids so far, we have only explored one corner of our tool box—specifically, how to make our weapons bigger and stronger. It is a crude tactic offering diminishing returns against an opponent that is clearly able to evolve to counter it.

It is time that we began considering other means.

There must be a central mechanism of control within the Thargoid, some means of communication between them, which could be studied and maybe even disrupted. One day, it might even be possible for us to wrest control of a swarm from the host, and turn them against their masters.

The Thargons are an under-appreciated foe in this war. They divert resources and inflict sustained damage over time that keeps our forces off balance. They might not be the biggest opponent we face, but they are a numerous and constant threat.

As the legendary boxer Muhammad Ali said, some 1,400 years ago:

*"It isn't the mountain ahead that wears you down, it's the pebble in your shoe."*

## Special Thanks

In conducting the research for this article, *Sagittarius Eye* has relied on both live and recovered footage from ships and bait cams, many accounts from eyewitnesses, and consultation with a number of experts in the field. Whilst the sources involved were too numerous to thank individually, we would like to express our deepest thanks and gratitude to the many brave souls who came forward, and to the families of those who were lost in the attempt.

*A Ballet of Blades and Steel*

Written by: DrNoesis

Photography: Jarminx

Infographics: DanIRW

Page design: LexMoloch



It's been estimated that around 16% of the human population takes some kind of painkiller, pill or over the counter oil supplement, every day, to combat the often crippling effects of arthritis.

# Storm in a Tea Cup

## Haidne Black Brew

In groundbreaking new research from a team at Harris Hospital in Miola, released earlier today, it looks like those days could be a thing of the past for many people.

to promote good joint health. A number of different medical facilities are now considering offering the beverage as part of their standard menu.

Members of the nursing team noticed that when treating in-patients at their facility, those patients who also suffered from arthritis reported that their symptoms began to ease after the kitchen staff accidentally began preparing drinks of tea for the patients using the overseer's private Haidne Black Brew supplies.

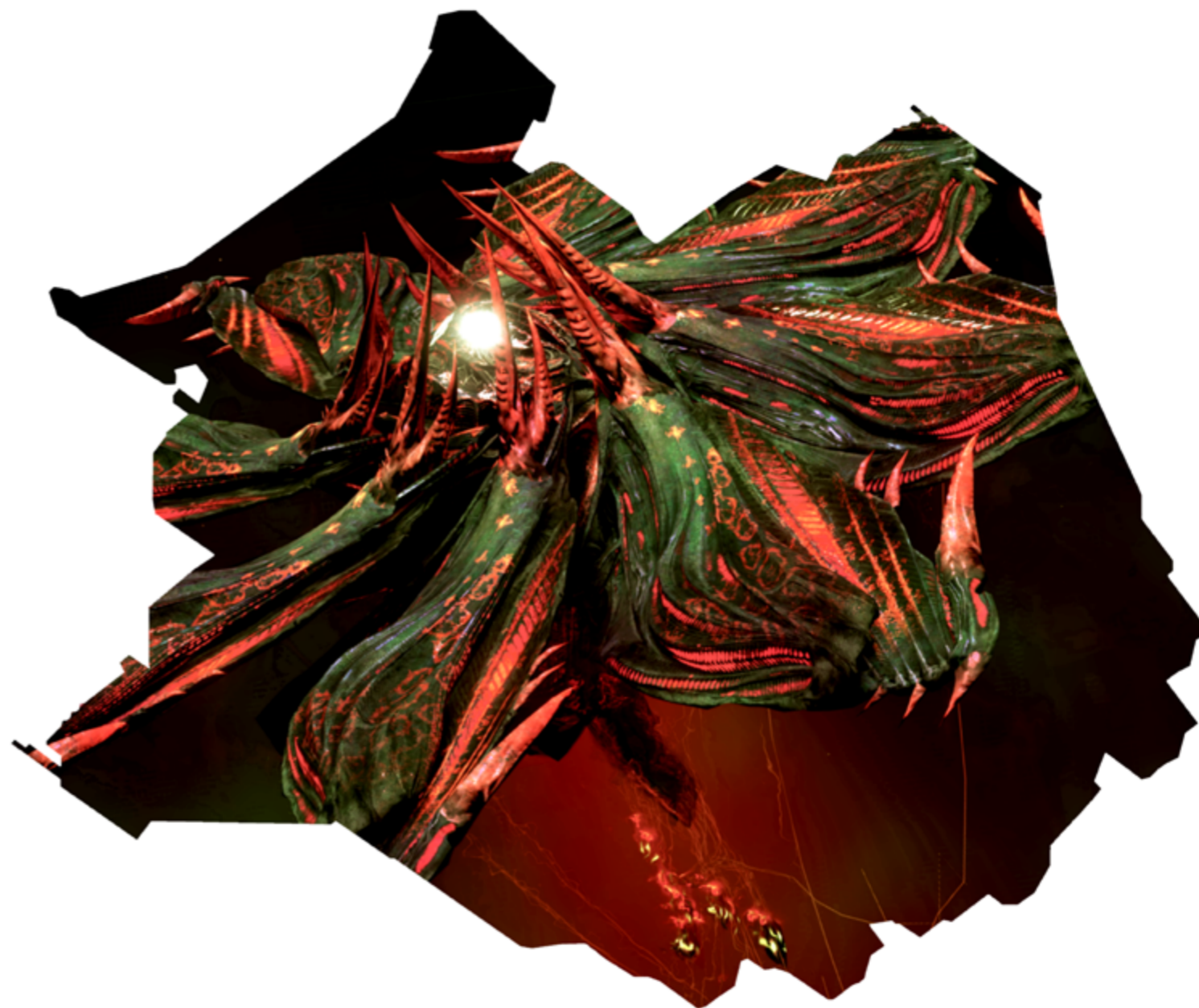
It should be noted that due to the cost and difficulty in transporting the tea, medical trusts may be unable to offer it to all patients, and it may well end up restricted to private or premium-rate clients only.

After the medical staff began investigating the issue, it quickly became apparent that the rare mineral-based beverage in fact represents an excellent source of gold and other precious metals and minerals that are needed

However bosses at Searfoss Enterprise in Haidne report that they are more than up to meeting the increased demand, and they remain as happy as ever to welcome new private clients who wish to purchase their product for personal use.

### HAIDNE BLACK BREW

SOME TIMES, STEELING YOURSELF TAKES JUST A LITTLE MORE.



# LAKON

# COMBAT ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW

*How does the recent crackdown on criminal activities by the Pilots Federation and the superpowers affect the Galaxy's ever-growing combat sport scene?*

**M**odern combat sport remains an underground scene. Aside from the introduction of the Close Quarter Combat (CQC) championship by the Federation, there has been little official support or sponsorship of the sport. Indeed, CQC itself has seen a sharp decline in participants since introduction.

Despite this, the popularity of high-level competitive combat has been steadily on the rise. As opposed to providing infrastructure and turning a profit, the Pilots Federation and superpowers have long shunned the sport. While it has never been explicitly illegal, law enforcement has no issue crashing an arranged match if the slightest thing goes awry. The question is: why, and has the latest crackdown on criminal activities affected the situation? ▶

■ Combat Sport is becoming increasingly popular

## The Failure of CQC

It is first prudent to address why the obvious potential of CQC has not been reached. The problem is that the type of combat encountered in CQC does not reflect what pilots experience in the real world. Use of light fighters in complex structural environments is rare as it is. Introduction of other components such as capture the flag game modes, instant ship respawn, and 'power-ups' on the field, all make it fundamentally different. Those who fight seek to hone their combat ability for reality, or at least emulate it to the highest extent possible. This way permits neither. CQC is, at best, an arcade game for those at the top.

## Appeal

It can be hard to explain the appeal of the sport. There is little fame or fortune to be found. Some do it for the adrenaline. Some do it for practice. Some even do it out of sheer boredom, not knowing what else to do with their wealth. Despite the underground nature of it all, it is no secret that some of the Galaxy's richest compete, blow their fortunes doing so, and make them back just to do it all again. For most, it's a combination of these factors. Nothing can beat the feeling of a chase through asteroids, or the raw adrenaline rush of trying to regenerate a broken shield under fire.

Many have lost hundreds of millions of credits while competing. Losers spend their fair share of time in escape pods after losing a match, though usually not for too long. Even winning isn't a profitable prospect, with reloads and repairs being expensive in themselves. There is no fortune to be found here; in fact, the opposite is far more likely. Regardless, the appeal is there, and in fact the inherent costs and dangers both derive from the lack of state or corporate support and sponsorship.

The potential for profit is certainly there. Over the past three years an annual competition, known as the PvP league, has been independently held. Viewership has increased over the years; not everyone is interested in competing, but it makes for an amazing spectator sport. The same attributes on which Utopixx and the Federation tried to sell CQC apply, with one key difference—it's that much more real. The key element of reality makes for more interesting contests, and more relatability for an audience. Losing a virtual fighter is one thing. Being in an escape pod after your ship explodes is another. It is arguably dangerous, and deaths happen, though they are rare. There is little doubt that official competitions and infrastructure would make them even less common. It seems like a no-brainer: making a profit from a currently underground sport and in the process making it safer and more accessible. So why doesn't this happen?

## Stigma

The reason for the cold shoulder from any potential investor or host is due to the reputation that the sport comes with. The majority of participants are simply combat enthusiasts. Despite this, almost all the press coverage received is about a small part of the community: the criminals. Terrorists and pirates who prey on the weak frequently partake in the sport as well. Whenever high-profile incidents occur, they are always linked back to the perpetrator's involvement in the sport. It is accused of being a training ground for criminals. To an extent, that is true. Matches quite frequently include those known to take little notice of the law. Other members scarcely mention it; making waves in the community is a poorly informed choice at best, and a deadly mistake at worst. Participants are accused of being terrorist sympathisers because of this, though this guilt by association only. The sport is the passion of many. If no official avenues are open to take, then enthusiasts will most definitely go underground.

Understandably, it doesn't look good for an individual to associate with something viewed as a crime academy, even if the accusations directed at it are unfounded for the most part. It is easy to extrapolate the sort of backlash a sponsor could receive. The participants are widely vilified, and almost everyone who competes has had multiple run-ins with the law. Authority officers will use any excuse they can to crash a match before it's even begun—most frequently in the form of a pilot forgetting to disable their ship's auto crime report systems.

## The PvP Hub

The solution that has emerged is in the form of an independent coalition of all the major factions who compete: the PvP Hub. Quite simply, the Hub is a place where pilots are rapidly assigned teams by a matchmaking computer to allow easy organisation of fights. What formerly took potentially hours of planning and organisation has been reduced to painless minutes. The organisation of events into a single central location has simultaneously strengthened the sport's position against disruption and increased its popularity. At the time of writing, the Hub has over a thousand registered members with more signing up every day. Not only that, but with the random matchmaking system new entrants to the combat scene have the opportunity to fly both against and with the top tier pilots. Such an opportunity makes the sport far less intimidating, with domination of powerful, well-established teams a thing of the past.

The star system of San Tu plays host to the Hub. It was carefully chosen; it boasts a wide array of battle areas that can be used. Classic open space combat, light asteroid fields, dense icy rings, and even a scientific installation which can be made use of on special occasions. To make it happen, various groups worked with one of the local political factions to realise the concept. The Dragons of San Tu agreed to allow our activities occur without interference from any authority vessels, and out of the influence of the



■ CQC has failed to sate pilots' desire for combat

■ Advanced Tactical Response units strictly enforce the new regulations







■ The sport is often made out as a scapegoat for terrorism

superpowers' watchful eyes. They are the sport's first, and as it stands only, local state sponsor.

The Hub is a proof of concept; even a hastily organised independent setup has piqued the interest of those who previously would not have competed and has even begun to diminish the sport's criminal image. Yet despite this progress, it remains ignored and shunned by the galaxy's biggest players. This brings us to the next big challenge: the recent crackdown on crime.

**“ Some criminals have even set out to prove the failures of the new system, and bounties in the hundreds of millions remain unclaimed. ”**

### Collateral Damage

As of late February, new Bubble-wide regulations have been announced concerning law enforcement. A significant number of terrorist events—on the increase ever since ship engineering became available to Pilots Federation members—have caused drastic measures to be put into place. The new system makes it harder to get away with most forms of crime, and arms authorities with extremely powerful ships and weaponry to enforce their new paradigm. These Advanced Tactical Response (ATR) ships are equipped with technology not available to Pilots Federation members, even through the use of engineers.

In general, Pilots Federation combatants approve entirely of strongly enforced laws. But these wide-ranging new measures have taken their toll on the community. Fights that take place outside of the Hub are shut down at an ever-increasing rate. Matches are crashed by authority vessels and meddling self-proclaimed vigilantes alike. Many who chose not to use the Hub due to its extensive ruleset have been forced to relocate, and this has caused tensions in the community. Many pilots have recently been excluded for violation of the Hub's rules, and others have simply quit the sport altogether, citing the new risks associated with it.

There is little the community can do to fight back. Certainly, they hunt those who transgress the Hub's rules; such pilots who come to the Hub at the wrong time are frequently destroyed and chased out for their actions, but it isn't enough.

The community has extensively lobbied the Pilots Federation for recognition and continues to do so. It seems, however, that their calls fall onto deaf ears. Likely, this is due to the widely believed stereotype that the sport is simply a terrorist academy.

The new measures demonstrate one of two things. Either the Pilots Federation is unwilling to cater to the sport in any form, or they believe it not possible. Regardless of which of these is the case, pressure continues to mount from the community on the Pilots Federation to state its position on the situation.

It is arguable that these measures have not succeeded with their primary goal. Many more pilots are now facing charges for accidental weapons discharge, despite assurances of leniency in this area. Some criminals have even set out to prove the failures of the new system, and bounties in the hundreds of millions remain unclaimed.

### Legalisation and Regulation

History has proven time and time again that the way to control an activity is to regulate it through law. Going back millennia, regulation of everything from drugs to physical fighting made them available to those informed adults who sought them, and—more importantly—safer for everyone. So, until the Pilots Federation recognises the sport, looks after its participants and regulates events, tensions are likely to increase.

*Combat On The Right Side Of The Law*

**Written by:** Mini\_Watto

**Photography:** MAXimilian, Mini\_Watto

**Page design:** LexMoloch

# Pirating With Style

Flying with The Screaming Eagles

I killed him. I never meant to. And, technically speaking, he killed himself, ramming the shields of the *Fer-de-Lance* I'd only intended to use to intimidate. But nonetheless, he died at my hand, in a brief cacophony of fury and fire. If I hadn't been there, in that moment, in that place, he might have made it.

This should not at all have been my story. But as I flew deeper into the heart of the Screaming Eagles—that most infamous, caddish yet devilishly-persuasive of pirate organisations—I became so enmeshed in their world it would have been impossible to ignore how their tale got under my skin. This is, unavoidably, not just the story of the Screaming Eagles, but also this reporter's fight to reveal the story—before the story revealed me.

“The Screaming Eagles have established themselves as a highly active group, recruiting only the best and most idealistic of pilots into their ranks.”

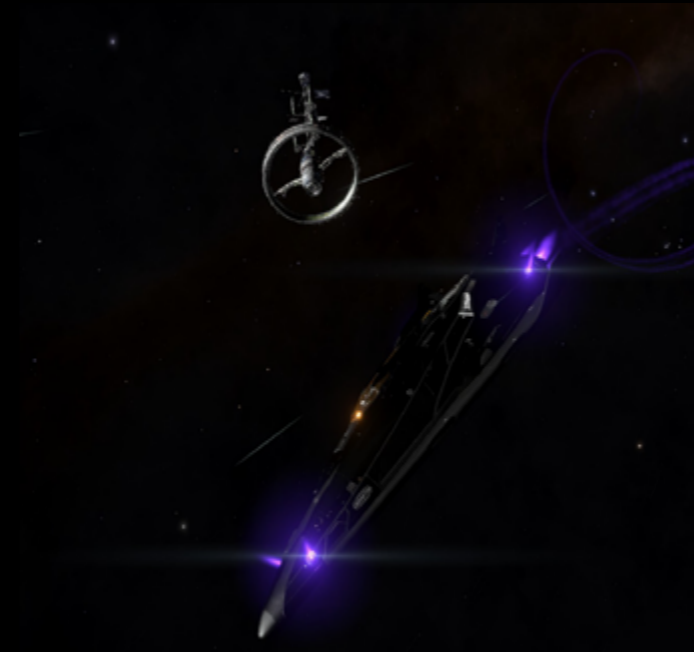
Commander Raymond S. Colton never meant to form a group. Operating as a freelancer in Alliance space, he was a pirate of both modest skill and modest means. Over his early career a loose band of pirates coalesced around him, mainly through common, short-term goals, but it was only in December 3301 that the meeting that led to the creation of the Screaming Eagles happened.

Commander MesaFalcon was hauling goods in the Wurango system when Colton attacked him. There was an argument.

**There was an exchange of fire. There was a clear victor. And after, both pilots had found what they didn't know they were looking for;**

Colton, a pilot who could best him in single combat, and MesaFalcon, a pilot who could be useful in building a fleet founded on principle and bound by an idealistic view of how the galaxy might operate.

However, it was several months until the group that would become The Screaming Eagles began to take shape. Colton was a capable and charismatic leader, but his vision of the group was somewhat limited, all he cared about was robbing and moving on. MesaFalcon, however, sought a particular personality type; people who understood how important a villain can be in helping others reach their full potential. Besides this, the notion of building a grand narrative was an exciting prospect. Could it be done? Earning notoriety without attracting animosity?



■ Eschaton, Whitmann's press/piracy ship

To this end Mesa recruited Commanders Denair, Icarus Prime, and MockOmega. These pilots formed the progressive and idealistic portion of the wing. And soon after, while relieving traders at a busy system of their cargo (without killing a single one) and all flying only Eagles, MesaFalcon realised what their group should be named. The Screaming Eagles were born.



■ The Crucible Ritual



■ Adrasteia, Commander Ar'Vessah's hot Fer-de-Lance

*I met the Eagles and we winged up in the Othime system, where an appeal for various commodities by the local faction had enticed a deluge of traders. MesaFalcon, MockOmega, Icarus Prime and Charles von Hackbeil greeted me with warmth and promised to give me a story worthy of writing about.*

*I was flying a partially-engineered Fer-de-Lance, but it was mainly for show to intimidate novice pilots and built for speed should the situation arise that I needed to make a quick getaway. While systems appealing for goods attract traders who, in turn, attract pirates, pirates also attract bounty hunters; it would be easy to pick up a 'wanted' tag and attract the attentions of much more combat-ready pilots than me.*

*But that was to come. Our first victim was laughably easy. The sheer volume of traffic around Levi-Montalcini Dock meant cargo-laden traders were forced to line up and wait their turn to land and offload. We simply dropped out of supercruise at the station, scanned all the ships and found a weaponless Federal Assault Ship waiting for a landing slot. A polite request to drop half his cargo or be consigned to oblivion left him with no choice. An Eagle gathered the goods and minutes later simply sold them at the Black Market within the station. The profit was laughably small, but it was the sheer audacity that delighted me.*

*Even Commander Vegejuusto, the victim of the robbery, seemed to be accepting of the 'transaction'.*

*"I'm not against piracy. We all have to earn a living, and not everyone can do the legal jobs."*

He went on, "The nature of their request made it much easier to accept. I saw it as a gesture of solidarity and altruism. They might have come from poverty, living a day at a time."



**Who am I to say no to a polite offer from heavily-armed pirates?**

More like-minded pirates joined the ranks. The new recruits had a shared view; that of a gang that, although criminal, had more to gain by treating all they encountered with reasonability and respect. Gradually they evolved to the point where there were so many positive reactions to the way they conducted business that an ethos emerged almost organically. However, embracing the role of the villain in order to drive the traders and bounty hunters they encountered to become the best version of themselves, came with certain unwelcome expectations.

To counter this, the Eagles vowed to abide by twin principles. Firstly, they would only accept new members worthy of not just their respect but also the respect of those they would rob. And secondly, to follow the principles of truth, honour, and vigilance; to stay true to the ideal of the gentleman pirate, to honour each other and their adversaries, and to demonstrate vigilance by ensuring they would be able and willing to stand and fight for the fleet and its ideals.



■ MesaFalcon in his white Fer-de-Lance

In terms of making a name for themselves, this ethos paid dividends in short order. After a few operations in the Bubble a chance encounter with a shadowy organisation—that MesaFalcon refuses to name—suggested the Eagles to turn their attention to the growing community out in Colonia. To the Screaming Eagles, this appeared to present not only a unique opportunity to make the most of their brand of activity, but also to sample the romance of the frontier lifestyle in a region so remote from the Bubble. The Eagles had a vision of becoming local adversaries in order to push the region to be at its best while helping to add colour and excitement to Colonia.

After an initial and largely uneventful trip out to the region, they were determined their second visit to Colonia would be attention-grabbing. The Eagles knew they had to make a grand entrance if they were to be taken seriously, and so came up with a plan to truly announce themselves on the Colonia stage—they would threaten to bomb the emblematic Jaques Station with Unknown Artefacts unless they received a quantity of palladium.

## An elaborately-staged, formal unveiling of a UA to a local reporter in the icy rings of a planet in the Colonia system led to a sensationalist article in the Colonia Gazette

which brought the Eagles to the attention of the wider community in the region. What barely anyone knew is that the Eagles had no intention of bombing Jaques Station; it was merely a way to establish the 'Gentlemen Pirates' as part of the ongoing story of the region.

*Next, we flew around in supercruise looking for unarmed traders. Even this process was electrifying to me. I found myself chattering over comms that I'd found a good target. The whole time MesaFalcon was encouraging the wing, myself included, and giving tips on tactics for interdiction and how best to engage a victim.*

*We stole with a smile and always, always with the utmost respect. Several times traders thought they would simply boost away far enough to jump back into supercruise. They were persuaded otherwise with some expert frameshift drive sniping. I was giddy, high on the feeling, the buzz of being stronger, faster, and with enough guns to make pilots drop their cargo.*

*We even engaged with pilots intent on claiming the bounties on our heads. Armed as they were for heavy engagement they soon drove us away, equipped as we were for piracy and built only to scare traders. This, too, was an opportunity to see how good the Eagles were in combat. Despite inferior builds, they kept a wing of four bounty hunters extremely busy for half an hour before both sides decided honour was satisfied. I loved every minute of it. I finally understood.*

*It wasn't the money, the huge guns, or even the excitement. It was the creeping exhilaration of belonging somewhere and to a group of people who would stand beside you whatever the odds, and laugh, learn, and teach the entire time. The feeling of writing a story a little less humdrum than most, and that intoxicating sense—no matter how illusory—that for at least a little while, a pilot could be the centre of their own story.*

Over the next few months, the Screaming Eagles made contact with the Colonia Militia, conducting training exercises and making friends along the way. The combined forces of the Militia and the Eagles took on and repelled an incursion by notorious killers of The Smiling Dog Crew, and later went head to head with another gang of tyrants who clearly believed Colonia was undefended. It became clear after a while that several members of the Militia were ideal candidates in outlook and ability to become Eagles. Recognising that more fun was to be had in the Bubble, the Eagles returned with these Militia members in tow. Weekly sparring sessions as well as numerous other activities cemented this bond, and soon these Militia pilots were incorporated into the Eagles. One such pilot, Ar'Vessah, told *Sagittarius Eye* what prompted her to join the type of organisation she had once sworn to protect Colonia from.

*"They're a bunch of open-minded, sophisticated, well-skilled guys. MesaFalcon is a great mentor. Besides, they deal with everyone in a friendly a respectful way; I really love their principles. That's why I had to join."*

In April 3303, the Screaming Eagles received a surprising offer—to protect Tsu Annabelle Singh, one of renowned outlaw Salome's associates, in her dash across the Bubble to reveal information about a huge conspiracy to keep information related to the Thargoids from the general public. Clearly the Eagles' reputation for excellence was reaching more and more ears, and while a band of pirates seemed a risky choice for such a crucial mission, their principles of seeking truth led them to conclude that this was a mission worth assisting with.

Despite Salome meeting her end that night, the Eagles safely delivered Tsu to her destination, and then in typical style reconvened for a sparring session. SAGi managed to contact Tsu. She said:

*"I am very idealistic. So it made sense for them to put everything on the line for a noble cause; after all, I have given up everything I had for it, too."*

I expected I might get a kick out of it. I didn't expect that it would be a kick I seriously considered repeating, later, alone.

And so to today. The Screaming Eagles have established themselves as a highly active group, recruiting only the best and most idealistic of pilots into their ranks. To this end, a ritual is undertaken by Commanders wishing to join. Those who have proven to established members they will uphold the principles of truth, honour and vigilance are invited to take part in a trial, known as The Crucible. Prospective Eagles must acquire a fair amount of cargo from piracy (without killing their victim unless necessary) then haul it 8000 light years to the Eagle Nebula. There they find a particular moon on which there

stands a particular peak, and it is here they must drop their illicit cargo as a symbol of their dedication. After all, only the most dedicated pirate would fly that far only to make a loss.

When this solemn ritual is completed, the pilot will no longer be merely a friend—they will be family.

So what does the future hold for the Screaming Eagles? It is rumoured that plans are already under way to take over an unnamed system on the fringe of human space in order to build a permanent home for the Eagles family. Doubtless there will be more adventures and more recruits along the line. The line between doing good and honourable piracy will be flown. After all, there are always more stories to write.

*A billion stars were shining bright, and then I killed him. Shamefully, I didn't even catch his name. He was flying an Asp. He didn't listen to the polite requests from the Eagles—and myself—to drop some of his cargo. Again and again he tried to escape. Again he was sniped, cut off, hunted down. Eventually, his hull at 6%, and swooping desperately like a terrified bird, he boosted directly at me. I'll never know if it was one last mad act of defiance, or if he really thought he could still get away. The outcome was the same, either way. An impression of colour; a sound I saw and felt more than heard. And then only wreckage. We aligned our ships' noses to go.*

*"Ah, that's a shame," said MesaFalcon. "But he tried to run. Let's find another."*

*Later, with the Fer-de-Lance already sold at a loss and back in my Viper IV, I parked up on a quiet moon and thought about the night. I knew I was changed, for better or worse. The universe isn't black or white; like the best ideals, it's full of colour. And sometimes even the darkest of colours can be beautiful.*

## Flying With The Screaming Eagles

**Written by:** Whitmann

**Photography:** Whitmann, MesaFalcon, Ar'Vessah, Charles von Hackbeil

**Page design:** Zaclobsterboy



After 104,000 light years and four months of travel, the Minerva Centaurus Expedition (MCE) came to an end on March 11th 3304. 59 dedicated pilots completed this epic journey along the Centaurus-Scutum arm in order to explore the sparsely-explored eastern side of the Galaxy, before continuing anti-clockwise to 'galactic north' and finally straight to Colonia as the Asp flies.

The expedition was named after Minerva, the ancient goddess of wisdom and heroic endeavours. In between heroically adding to the sum of human knowledge, MCE pilots met weekly to unwind with races and story-swapping.

Commander Yanick, who previously led the successful Mercury 7 Expedition in 3303, shared his thoughts with SAGi on the MCE now that the dauntless participants have gone their separate ways.

**We had a really fantastic time and made some amazing discoveries**

*"We had a really fantastic time and made some amazing discoveries. One pilot, Commander Fru, came upon binary, co-orbital ammonia worlds; a find so rare the Pilot's Federation Galactic Mapping Project have classified it as a Point of Interest, named Venenum Geminos.*

*We often used waypoint locations to good effect. We had terrific fun at Waypoint 13, where there was a natural racecourse. Flying fighters through canyons at 700 metres a second is always a thrill!"*

It would be a brave pilot who bet against Commander Yanick devising similarly involving and rewarding expeditions in the future. The Minerva-Centaurus Expedition participants are worthy of salute and the highest praise for their endeavours.



Minerva Centaurus Expedition Ends

**Written by:** Whitmann

**Photography:** Yanick, Whitmann, Skye Carter, Qohen Leth

**Page design:** McNicholl

the rare & delicate sweet treat  
all the way from Karsuki Ti

# KARSUKI locusts



**West Market, Karsuki Ti**

Galactic Average Price  
8,543 CR Rare  
Allocation 18t



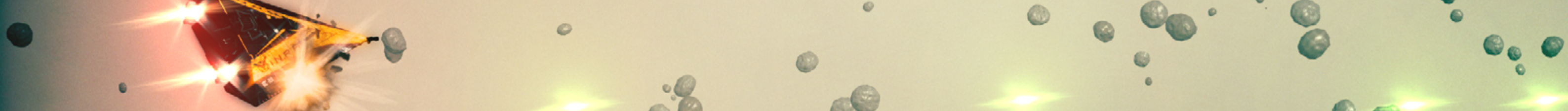
# INRA

## INTERGALACTIC HEROES



The Intergalactic Naval Reserve Arm (INRA) is something of a dirty word in today's Galaxy. The recent research cooperation between the major superpowers, Aegis, has been compared to the INRA by detractors. In some parts of the Core systems, young people are even using a variation of 'inra' as a slang expletive, where it invariably means something like 'messed up' or 'extremely wrong'.

However—in light of our current understanding of the Thargoids—should we reconsider our views on the INRA?



The INRA was formed in 3125, at the start of the first Thargoid war, and defended humanity from widespread alien attacks at great cost to the pilots involved. For over two decades INRA pilots, departing from the main base at Facece, helped keep the Thargoids tied up in deep space battles. After the withdrawal of the Thargoids from known space, INRA pilots kept watch for almost a century, actively on patrol right up to the year 3252, guarding humanity against the return of the octagonal menace.

The INRA did eventually fall—some say corrupted by power, inaction and age. Leaked documents indicate that the final straw was almost entirely the work of a misguided independent pilot swayed by a desperate

INRA recruiter, combined with the political ire of the newly-minted and reckless Alliance of Independent Systems.

Sadly, needing to place blame, the capricious court of public opinion now judges the INRA harshly. Recently, many independent pilots actively worked to disrupt Aegis operations, going so far as to attack Aegis supporters and petition for the removal of Aegis assets from stations such as Obsidian Orbital—because of the perceived link between the INRA and Aegis.

*“Aegis are pretty much INRA reborn, there is more than enough evidence to support that.”*

*- Commander Bonzodog, January 3304*

**“ For over two decades INRA pilots flying from the main base at Facece helped keep the Thargoids tied up in deep space battles. ”**

### Corrupt And Without Morals

One of the major factors inciting disdain for INRA has been the recent discovery of long-abandoned wartime research bases (covered in issue #3 of this publication). These discoveries have revealed a few snapshots of the INRA's research that show some elements within the organisation conducted experiments on live Thargoids.

Furthermore, the crash site of an old Cobra identified as belonging to one of the Jameson clan revealed more details about the INRA mission that ended the war. Jameson claimed to have been 'tricked' about the exact nature of the devastating attack, and that INRA technicians tampered with the veteran spacer's navigational software causing him to crash into a planet in the HIP 12099 system on his return journey—leaving just enough time for him to leave a damning testimonial—proclaiming his innocence—in beacons left around the crash site and then vanish entirely from history, leaving not even a corpse to be found.

These incidents are taken as shorthand for the INRA as a whole, as illustrated in December last year when Alliance Prime Minister Edmund Mahon commented:

*While the INRA records are indeed disturbing, it was the account of John Jameson that troubled me most. Here we have a man – who evidently did a great deal to defend civilisation from the Thargoids – who was deceived, manipulated and ultimately murdered by the INRA.*

In this statement, Mahon was careful to construe Jameson's story as a case of heroes versus villains. These, and similar sentiments, have been parroted by many officials, civilians and pilots across the Core.

However, many people are unaware that it was Meredith Argent—one of the founders of the Alliance—that actually led the crusade to have the INRA disbanded after the two organisations clashed over Thargoid policy.



## INRA vs. The Alliance

Reports have recently come to light revealing that INRA agents attempted, on several occasions, to prevent the young Alliance—specifically Turner and Argent—from seeking out and potentially antagonizing the long-dormant Thargoids in the 3250s. It's almost impossible to substantiate these reports at the present time—the Alliance has refused to release any information to the public regarding Mic Turner's death, other than claiming the INRA killed him, and the INRA's own records are long-lost. Indications are that the pair of ex-rebels leading the Alliance were determined to form an alliance with the Thargoids, possibly to gain a technological advantage over the Federation and Empire.

At this stage in our current conflict with the Thargoids we're learning that they are a hyper-territorial species and have laid claim to our area of space. In the recent report from the engineer Ram Tah, published by Aegis, we find out that the Thargoids are, essentially, an aggressively xenophobic race:

*The Guardians attempted to communicate with the Thargoids, but these efforts ended in failure. They determined that the Thargoids' survival instincts were so strong that they could not tolerate any potential threat, including the proximity of another space-faring civilisation.*

Federal President Zachary Hudson added, "It is now clear that there is no reasoning with this alien menace", while Imperial Admiral Denton Patreus commented, "This new information makes it clear that the Thargoids will reject any diplomatic overtures. We must redouble our efforts to defend ourselves from their antagonism."

**“ INRA was in every sense of the word a fusion between the legitimate military forces of the Empire and Federation. ”**

It would be fascinating to know what 'the Bubblegum Princess' would say now about her statement from last October:

*I read the INRA records, and frankly I was sickened. How could they treat living creatures that way? I've heard of governments inventing threats to support their military programmes. Maybe that's what the INRA was. A smokescreen.*

It's important to recall that the INRA was in every sense of the word a fusion between the legitimate military forces of the Empire and Federation. An historically unprecedented joint-division specifically established to defend humanity against the clear and present threat posed by the Thargoids.

## Defending Humanity

Li Yong-Rui, CEO of the Sirius Corporation, cut to the core of the INRA debate:

*If there's one thing these INRA logs make plain, it's that humanity is capable of defeating the Thargoids, especially when we work together.*

The INRA was led by two officials of equal rank, one from the Empire and one from the Federation. These two leaders put aside their natural distrust and worked together to face what was widely acknowledged to be the greatest foe ever faced by humans.

It had been known for centuries that there was a potentially hostile alien race out there—GalCop records indicate Thargoid encounters in the Pleiades region as early as 2810, the very earliest days of Hyperdrive exploration. Thargoid ships started plucking traders and explorers from Witchspace in the Core Systems in the 3120s and, in every encounter, the alien ships opened fire without any attempt to communicate.

GalCop quickly mounted a defense to keep member worlds safe, but it's well known that the organisation remained isolationist for most of its history—pilots who grew up in its borders often didn't even realise that the Federation and the Empire existed. The INRA was born of a necessity to keep citizens of the rest of the Galaxy safe, and despite the best efforts by many thousands of GalCop and INRA pilots in directly combating the Thargoids, no end to the war was in sight after a quarter-century of fighting.

There are gravestones stretching over the horizon on some worlds, standing as tribute to a generation falling to the lasers of these aliens. GalCop was forced to divert an ever-increasing number of independent merchant pilots to the war effort, and this attrition of commerce is often cited as one of the contributing factors to the collapse of GalCop in the 3170s.

It's possible to hypothesize that, had INRA not ended the war when it did, GalCop would likely still have fallen. And without the support of the most technologically advanced superpower to push them back, it's possible that the Thargoids would have overrun the Bubble before 3200.

Nobody knows just how much these organisations knew about the full extent of the Thargoid threat, since so much has been lost over the last hundred years. However we can easily see that towards the end of the war, both the INRA and GalCop were increasingly fighting on the back foot. The size of the Thargoid civilisation allowed the insectoids to fight a long-term campaign, slowly whittling our trained combat forces down faster than we could train new pilots. The research projects recently uncovered show the INRA as an organisation desperately searching for a solution to save humanity.

A prospecting team recently came across the wreckage of a ship bearing the black paint and crimson stripes of the old INRA livery. Fragmented surveillance recordings of a meeting held some time around 3290 were recovered from the computers, in which the primary speaker claims to be a member of INRA. A key section is transcribed here: ▶





[Male INRA Speaker 1]: "...And then the Thargoids came. They were superior, they were greater in number. And they had genocide on their minds. Humanity nearly went extinct. Like the dinosaurs, Robert, erased from hist- ...[inaudible]..."

INRA were able to stop them but the only ...[inaudible]... -ady we would have crumbled under the first wave, every planet and person lost forev- ...[inaudible]... [silence]... But for all that, Robert, the Tharg- ...[inaudible]... border skirmish. We don't know exactly what is happening inside their space, but we do know they are heading this way again."

This should give us pause. This wasn't a small war fought over a patch of dirt on a vast planet, or even a single star-system. Rather, it was a conflict against an immensely powerful and ancient expansionist enemy. An enemy with a confirmed history of territorial conflict spanning over one-million years. Standard weapons barely work against them, even now. Some of the uncovered INRA logs detail the development and disastrous testing of a

new type of conventional weapon at Carmichael Point in HIP 16824. The final recorded words of the brave personnel involved are troubling to hear, knowing that they gave their lives trying to defend a population that would later vilify them.

"Contact confirmed! ... Wait... wait. What is that? That's not a regular Thargoid ship. It's huge... tell command we've got a mothership here. Get them the data as soon as possible.

All right, all right, that's close enough. Fire all batteries!"

### Genocide and Biological Weapons

The major contention that any right-thinking individual will have with INRA's practices does not pertain to the massed ranks of scientists, administrators and combat personnel that defended the Bubble daily, but rather to the evidence of testing on live subjects, and the claims made by 'Whistleblower' found on the base computers of Stuart Retreat in the HIP 15329 system.

**“ It's clear that the Thargoid species was not destroyed, the INRA simply gave them a strong enough kick to reconsider attacking us.**

Testing on live subjects is abhorrent, and it's unclear why tests conducted on lab samples weren't deemed sufficient to determine the effectiveness of the Mycoid bioweapon. However, the very idea of using a bioweapon in this situation is one that should be addressed. For most commentators, this act alone put INRA beyond redemption. It's true that humanity has long had agreements written into law that vilify using biological weapons in any capacity; however, when dealing with a dangerously aggressive alien species intent on the destruction of humanity—what lengths *are* acceptable?


Should, for example, the INRA have refused to use the Mycoid virus and instead kept throwing thousands of ships and pilots at the Thargoids, eventually losing the war and allowing humanity to be overrun?

It's clear from the logs recovered, the twenty five-year history of the war, the numbers of dead, and the strain placed on even the mighty GalCop, that the INRA didn't turn to bio-weapons until it was literally out of options. From the logs recovered from Hollis Gateway on Hermitage 4 it transpires that the development of the Mycoid weapon was accidental, a part-time project by a junior researcher attempting to 'wipe out famine' went awry. This was not a dedicated bio-development project, but simply a desperate last-ditch attempt to capitalise on something that might actually turn the tide of the war. In many ways, that single decision is the sole reason why any of us are alive today to debate whether it was a good idea.

The question is—had the INRA's previous super-weapon proved effective, and the mothership been destroyed by a conventional weapons strike, would we still consider that a terrible act?

Yes, Thargoids suffered and died in large numbers because of the Mycoid attack, and Jameson felt guilty for an act he obviously considered unconscionable. However, it's equally true that many thousands of Thargoids have been killed in just the last few months (assuming the ships we're seeing now are indeed piloted by living beings, or sentient themselves). Reports from the last war indicate that Thargoids are much more resilient to damage than humans, being naturally armoured, so it's conceivable that many of them might survive for a time after their ships are disabled or destroyed. Yet despite these possibilities, droves of combat pilots are happy to defend systems from Thargoid incursions, taking pride in the number of "bugs" they destroy. Much in the same way INRA pilots did in the last war.

*"To: Commander Jameson  
From: Amaro Hem, Programme Coordinator, Taylor Keep, 12  
Trianguli A ...this mission, if executed successfully, could*



mean the end of our war with the Thargoids. Its importance cannot be overstated.

Good luck, Commander. The future of the human race is in your hands. All our hopes and prayers go with you."

It's also equally true that in the past few months thousands of human shipwrecks have been logged in the Pleiades area, including vast megaships, and more recently Thargoids have taken to attacking stations. The total loss of human life has not yet been weighed, but at this stage it's conceivably in the millions. And now Thargoids have pushed into the Bubble, striking inhabited star systems.

Studies compiled in the 3250s indicate that the Thargoids likely share biological characteristics with insects found across thousands of terrestrial worlds. It is believed they have an organisational structure that revolves around a 'Queen' and a single-sex species where the

majority of the population are simply drones, bred for specific tasks, working for the collective betterment of the entire colony, without individuality themselves. Researchers have even concluded that Thargoids don't value individual drone lives at all, since they appear to operate as a single super-organism like many other insect species. While this does not necessarily entail the conclusion that Thargoids are unable to feel pain, it does somewhat alter the bracket for what might be considered acceptable to protect humanity. Many would consider using poison to discourage a colony of Arcturan Fire-Ants from nesting under a homestead entirely acceptable. While the analogy is flawed, **It's clear that the Thargoid species was not destroyed, the INRA simply gave them a strong enough kick to reconsider attacking us.**

"For all we know our Mycoid Infection could have been the equivalent of the flu"

- Commander IndigoWyrd

"I'd say that it's very possible that our use of a Biological weapon gave the Thargoids severe pause for thought, particularly given what happened with the Guardians."

- Commander Thatchinho

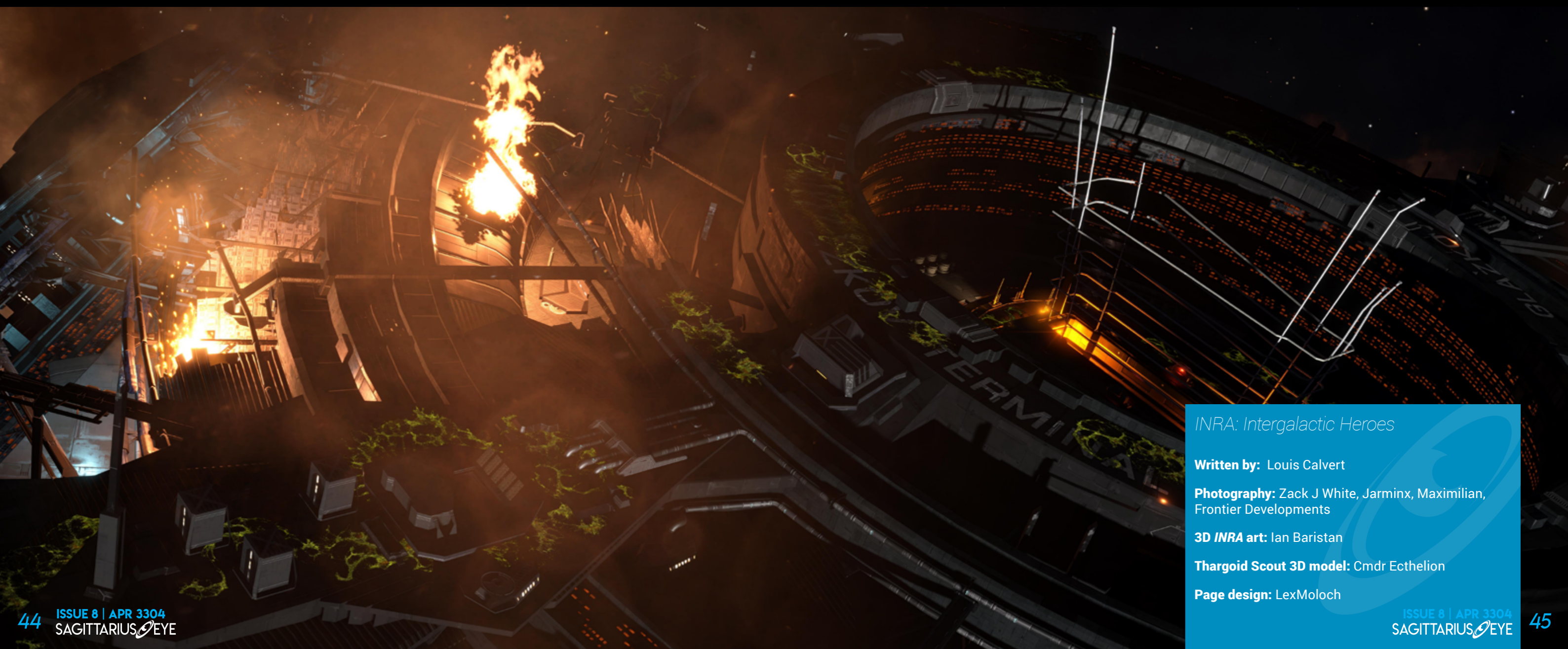
In the end, the actions of the INRA bought humanity 150 years more life to develop better weapons and defences. They were vilified and disbanded when they attempted to prevent the young Alliance from rekindling the Thargoids' interest in humanity. There are scattered pockets of evidence, rumours in spacer bars and fragmented reports that indicate an INRA remnant might have been operating in secret up to only a few years ago.

Have they been there the whole time, trying to stop humanity awakening the Kraken? Could the mysterious Black Flight that was widely reported to be operating in the Pleiades and monitoring the Thargoid installations over the last couple of years be this INRA remnant? (see The Mystery Of The North Star, also in this issue).

Thargoids are a deadly threat. The history we've recovered from the Guardian civilisation shows that they were able to beat back the Thargoids only after a protracted and costly war. The weapons they needed to develop to beat the Thargoids caused a change in their society so profound that they couldn't recover, and ironically finished the job the Thargoids started.

In order to prevent a repeat of the Guardians' mistake, maybe we should swallow our collective pride and reconsider history. Maybe those few INRA people who developed, approved and deployed the Mycoid weapon knew they were compromising their souls; but in the process they bought the lives of trillions of humans for decades to come. Maybe it's time we stopped spitting on the legacy of the Intergalactic Naval Reserve Arm and accept them as heroes.

Flawed heroes, to be sure, but worthy of the name nonetheless.



INRA: Intergalactic Heroes

Written by: Louis Calvert

Photography: Zack J White, Jarminx, Maximilian, Frontier Developments

3D INRA art: Ian Baristan

Thargoid Scout 3D model: Cmdr Ecthelion

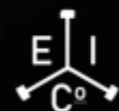
Page design: LexMoloch

# CONQUER THE STARS WITH THE EAST INDIA COMPANY



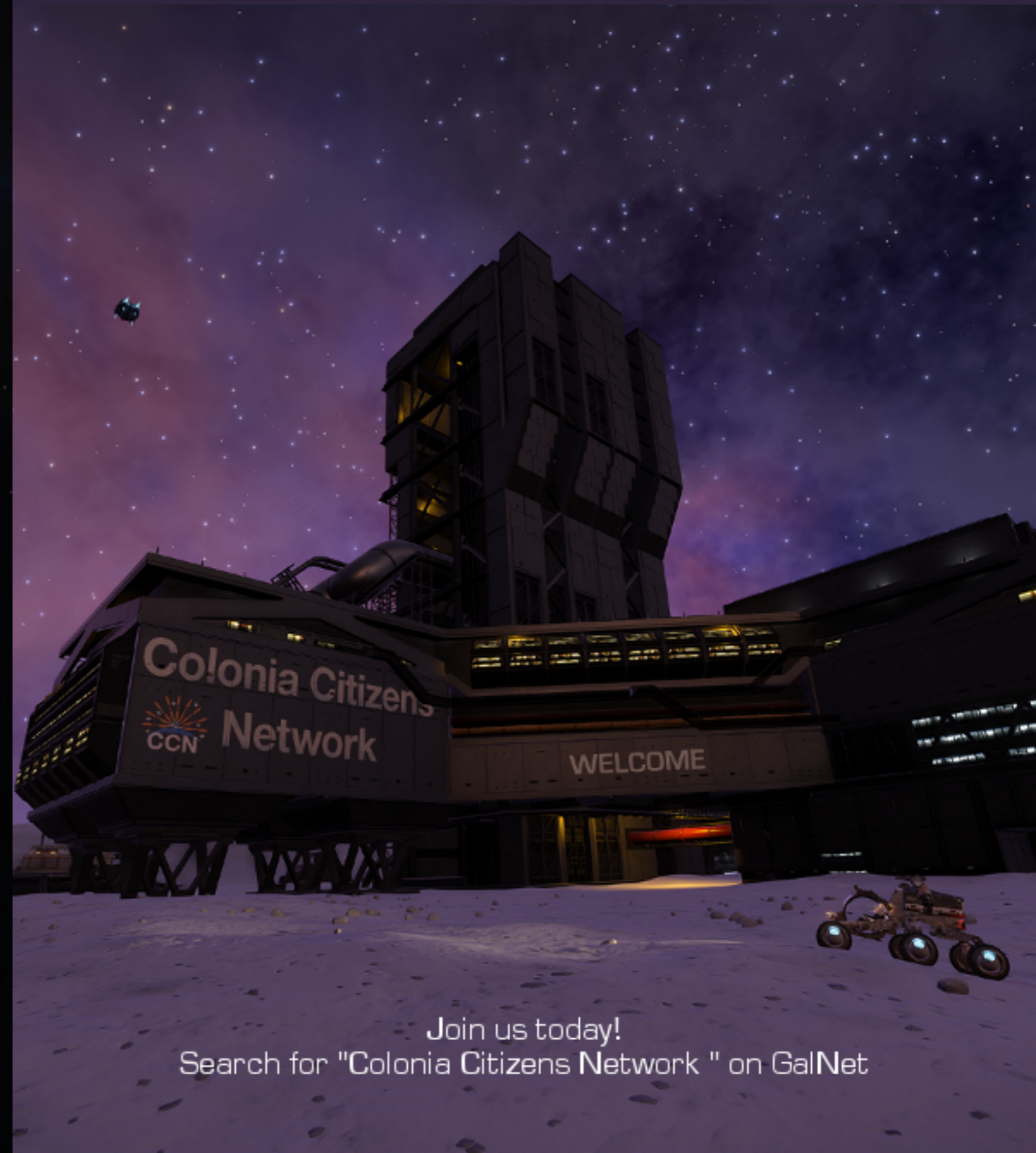
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# POLARIS

the mystery of the North Star

A JUMP LOCK TO THIS SYSTEM HAS BEEN DENIED.

In October of 3301, your correspondent made a trip to each star in the Orion constellation. On the way back, he decided to take a detour via an enigmatic, named star few now remember the significance of.

Having charged the frame shift drive for the final jump, the navigational computer presented me with this message:

*"A jump lock to this system has been denied."*

As anyone who has travelled far beyond humanity's frontiers—or even to military systems—will know, not everywhere in the Milky Way is accessible to private explorers. Not because these star systems are physically impossible to visit, but because our own computers prohibit us from doing so.

In later years, I discovered that this particular message is unique. Nowhere else in the Galaxy does any other 'permit lock', as they're known, trigger this message. Lovers of classic literature will hear echoes of Dave Bowman's warning to the rest of humanity:

*"All these worlds are yours - except Europa. Attempt no landing there."*

• Arthur C. Clarke, 2010: Odyssey Two

POLARIS  
Class A



## FACT FILE

### Polaris Star

Polaris, designated Alpha Ursae Minoris. This star was commonly referred to as the 'North Star' or 'Pole Star' in the cultures of old Earth. From Earth, Polaris is the brightest star in the constellation of Ursa Minor, and is very close to the north celestial pole, making it for much of Earth's history the pole star.

Polaris has the distinction of being the closest variable Cepheid star, and fluctuates in magnitude by as much as 0.5 over a cyclic period of 4 days.

Distance from Sol: 433.8 light years

Some readers will recall a past article in these pages on 'the Shadow Galaxy'—the myriad hints that greater powers than those we see orchestrate the details of our lives. The feeling of being denied the power to use my own ships' drive by my ship itself was probably the first hint your correspondent had that the largest organisations in space were colluding to hide truths from us. Someone, somewhere had done this. Lakon, the manufacturer of the ship? Sirius, the leaseholder of the frame shift technology? Universal Cartographics, the keepers of the maps?

### Just what is going on at Polaris?

'Polaris' is a contraction of the Latin name for the star, 'Stella Polaris', or 'polar star'. This is because, remarkably, it has, for much of recorded history, been nearly exactly in line with Earth's celestial North. This made it crucially important for that planet's ancient navigators, who would use it to read primitive instruments which relied upon the planet's magnetic field.

There is a simple irony in the fact that a star pivotal in our early navigations confounds our present ones.

The A-class giant is in a trinary orbit with two other main-sequence stars. Over four hundred light years from Sol, and five hundred and fifty from Achenar, they are not obvious candidates for colonisation—but with the recent spurt of colonisation in the Pleiades, not far beyond, it's reasonable to assume there is human activity there.

### Because if not human activity... What else could it be?

It's tempting to imagine a primitive sentient race, evolving on a Polarian moon, unknowingly sheltered by a cabal of patriarchal humans. Rumour suggests otherwise.

Though nobody now knows upon what frontier it was first encountered, the rumour has persisted for decades that the Interstellar Naval Reserve Arm (INRA) had a satellite in Polaris, monitoring Thargoid ships and (some whisper) some kind of portal. Nobody alive is able to corroborate this, as nobody is known to have visited the system. It could be that the INRA still have a presence there—but if so, what benefit could they see to allowing their questionable history to come to light via the abandoned bases discovered last year? But if whatever stations the INRA had in Polaris are just as lifeless as those we've already found, why hide them? And if there is any truth to the Thargoid aspect of these rumours, it's not clear why humanity would collude to hide the aliens' presence in that one particular system when those same aliens are busily laying waste to our cities closer to home.



**There is one person who could possibly shed more light on the Polaris mystery, and that is Bill Turner.**

Despite obstinate silence from the Alliance on the matter, one unverifiable story asserts that the superpower contracted pilots to investigate objects in Polaris in the early 3250s. One of those pilots is alleged to have been Mic Turner, Bill's father. Bill has never spoken about his father's career or links to the Alliance, though 'Turner' is certainly a name that echoes in the hallways of Alliance history. Bill's base is on an airless world in the Alioth system, after all; the seat of the Alliance government, and itself a permit-locked system.

If those stories are true, Bill Turner's father was one individual who might have known what lies beyond that enigmatic jump-lock message. But on this matter, Bill is silent.

The facts are these: there is something at Polaris which some authority doesn't wish to be discovered. That authority is powerful enough to manipulate consumer-grade hyperdrive modules and muzzle Universal Cartographics. It's implausible that humanity's masters would hide a Thargoid presence so close to the Bubble while those same aliens are laying waste to the Bubble itself. But if the INRA were still in existence, it would be rational for them to conceal themselves somewhere, and perhaps misdirect the Galaxy's attention by allowing 'evidence' of their demise to be discovered.

As so often in these pages, we have depressingly few answers and lots of substantial but seemingly-unlinked questions. But next time Bill Turner asks you for Bromellite, consider asking him about his dad in return.



**There is a simple irony in the fact that a star pivotal in our early navigations confounds our present ones.**

■ INRA base Almeida Landing



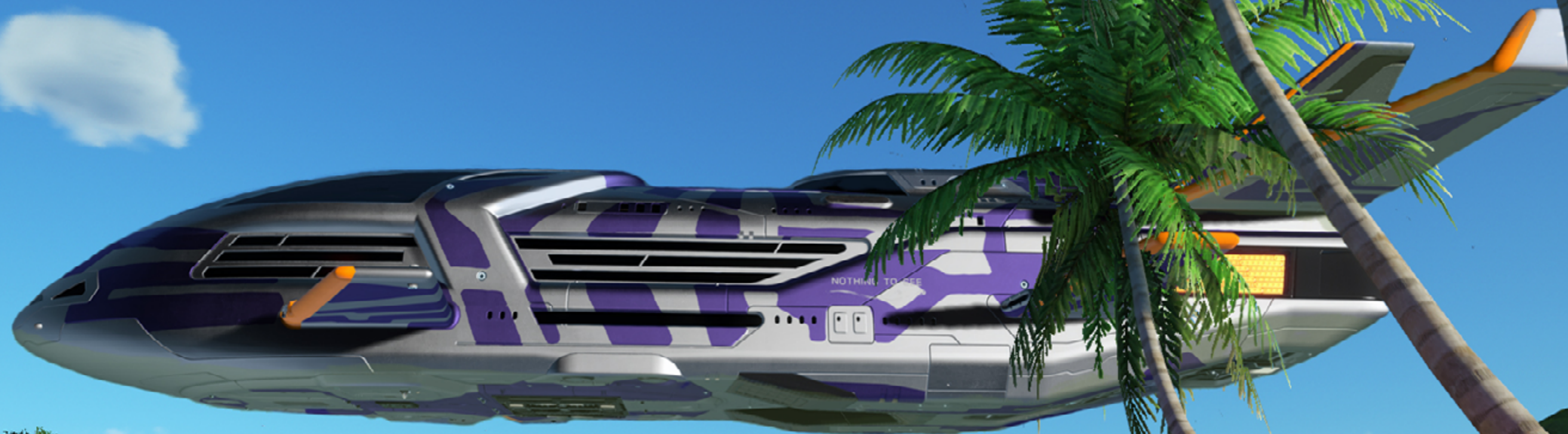
*Polaris: Mystery of the North Star*

**Written by:** Souvarine

**Photography:** Edelgard von Rhein, Icarus Maru

**Page design:** McNicholl

*FLY WITH PRIDE*  
*FLY WITH HONOUR*  
*FLY WITH PRESTIGE*



  
SAUD KRUGER  
*excellence is our baseline*



# ALL AROUND THE GALAXY THE DEAD END'S CIRCUMNAVIGATION EXPEDITION

The Galaxy is an unfathomably large place. In time, and through technology, we have devised the best routes to cross it in the most time-economical way.







It would seem to be in everyone's best interest—of passenger cruises just as of long-range haulers—to find out how to get from A to B in the least number of frame shift drive (FSD) jumps. And yet, there are some self-punishing explorers who prefer to do the exact opposite, and to look for the *longest* possible route to take. Enter the Dead End Circumnavigation Expedition, the longest expedition—in terms of distance travelled—ever planned by galactic explorers. A monumental 334,000 light year journey, planned to take participants all around the galaxy's edge and back to the starting point after an entire year in the black.

We got in touch with Cmdr Flirble Rasok (AKA Macros Black)—the mind behind this ambitious and punishing expedition—via long-range comms.

Flirble Rasok, how did this all begin?

*"In early 3303 rumors about 'stellar streams' (hidden pathways to other galaxies) appeared on a number of discussion threads on the Pilots Federation network. I thought that would be an amazing discovery, although my expectations of actually finding such a stellar stream were not very high, since the Galaxy rim is already well travelled and explored. The expedition was essentially put in motion by these words of mine: "So circumnavigation it is". I then created the Dead End Circumnavigation Expedition (DECE) group and began planning the route on my ship's computer. The waypoints were easy to find, also thanks to some great input from other experienced explorers. Cmdr Henkka had already been talking about doing a circumnavigation and was the first to sign up. He and others have been an indispensable help in the planning and with the ongoing efforts to make the expedition a success. The challenge is to find appropriate base camps, but our fine scouting team is doing excellent work and locates great base camp sites, scouting ahead of the main fleet."*

This sounds exciting. Why don't you and other expedition members tell us about the highlights so far? What has been the most memorable moment for you?

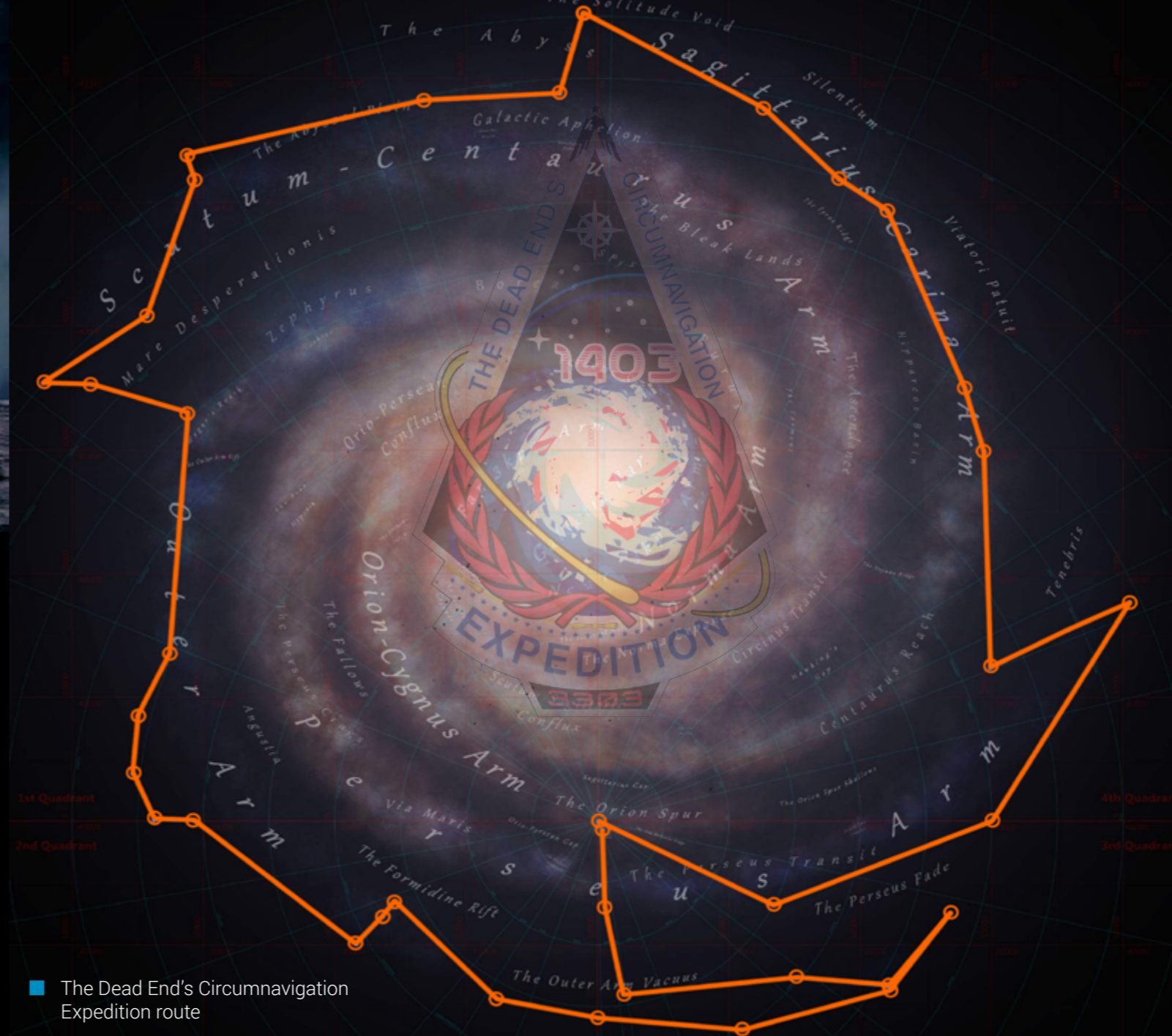
**Cmdr Flirble Rasok:**

*The things I enjoy the most on the expedition are our bi-weekly meetups at the base camps, the DECE talkshow with Henkka and invited guests, the mass-jumps, and to see all the green commander icons on the ship's galaxy map as we slowly inch our way around the Galaxy.*

**Cmdr Tazbert:**

*For me, the defining moment of the expedition was when, after a stupid mistake while trying to land, I had to abandon my ship and be transported back to the nearest station, thus wiping out the last 30,000 or 40,000 ly of travel. I sat brooding the station's bar for quite a while, trying to decide whether or not I had the strength to board my new ship (thanks to the Pilots Federation insurance) and leave again towards the black. It took some time (and a few beers!) but eventually I found I could do it.*

■ Waiting for the fog at BC#2



■ The Dead End's Circumnavigation Expedition route



■ Preparing for mass-jump from BC5

**Cmdr Weylandt:**

*My most memorable moment of DECE was when I crashed into a canyon wall and went from perfectly a healthy ship to 6% hull in seconds. This happened about 24,000 ly away from Colonia and 28,000 ly from Sol. I was prepared to desperately rush to Colonia for emergency repairs when Cmdr Eryn responded to my mayday and raced 8,000 ly to assist me.*

*Well, as this is my first expedition ever, it'll always have a special place in my heart. When I first showed up at Base Camp 0 in the Witch Head Nebula, my ship computer's contact list quadrupled within minutes.*

**Cmdr Henkka77:**

*My favourite experience at DECE? That is easy: it has been, by far, the talkshows. These bi-weekly 45 minute liveshow via ship comms, broadcasted back to the Bubble, chatting with Macros and with our guests, have been very relaxing and fun and I would like to believe that they have improved every time.*

*Doing those shows with Macros has been a really fun experience: he has been great co-host, luckily doing most of the talking. In particular, learning about our commanders' backgrounds and their history has been very interesting, and it has been nice to hear how people decided to become Pilots in the first place.*

**Cmdr LoneJohnSilver:**

*One fine memory I hold dear is when two Cmdrs and Fuelrats brought us beer to a Base Camp! (sorry if I don't remember who you are, but you will always be heroes in my mind!)*

**Cmdr Wanderflow:**

*I have had wonderful time taking my 33ly jump range, 700 metres-per-second (m/s) Courier to the rim, an experience with a nice contrast of hardships and easy "jump and honk" routine. The most memorable moment was when, failing to keep the pace and falling a bit behind the others, I tried to dip into the neutron layer below the outer arm. I dived down*

*by letting my ship computer plot a 500ly route, and then climbed back up through manual plotting. I repeated this a couple of times as my ship didn't have enough range to go through the non boosted jumps down there, where the star density is pretty low. So in the end this whole 'shortcut' ended up being slower than regular travel through the denser part.*

**Cmdr Col\_Cassad:**

*The Pilots Federation awarded me with my Elite exploration rank before began this expedition. But I feel that only after this unique expedition will I truly consider myself an elite explorer. It was a privilege to join this wonderful community of explorers, and this expedition gave us the opportunity to help each other during our long trek in the black. Such a long-distance trip is a real challenge, since everything can be dangerous; you musn't make mistakes when landing, or when manually plotting a route, nor should you neglect all those little maintenance jobs necessary to make sure that your ship will be fit for the trip, without the need for a stop at a station. It's a challenge for my patience too! I am also interested in astrophysics, and travelling all around the galaxy allows me to observe all sorts of peculiar and unusual phenomena.*

*The Dead End's Circumnavigation Expedition*

**Written by:** Wilfrid Sephiroth

**Photography:** DECE

**Page design:** LexMoloch

# PAROXYSM



***Bad ideas,  
turned stellar.***

# Meet the Team - Mat2596

Every now and then, we might give a non-reporter member of the SAGi team a column inch or two to tell their story. This month, we caught up with one of our longest-serving artists.

**H**ey Mat. Put those crayons down and come over here for a sec. Did you learn your craft formally, or are you self-taught?

*Self-taught for the most part. Of course, there were influences, I'm far from the best designer out there, and some of the designers of the Pilots Federation are outstanding. I guess the best way to explain how I got my skills was: practice makes perfect.*

Which artists most inspire you? Any historical influences?

*That's a good question; there are so many. One of my biggest inspirations has to be a bunch of designers dating back to old Earth; an ancient government organisation called the National Aeronautics and Space Administration had this lab—I think they called it the Jet Propulsion Laboratory—and they had these really talented designers known as 'The Studio'. They created posters and flyers for places in the Solar System and beyond. They were still using chemical rockets back then, so they weren't serious posters. They named the series 'Visions of the Future.' My mother used to have some replicas of them back on Biggs Colony.*

Aha. Fans of your work often comment on its retro feel!

*Observers have also noted that your work betrays a heavy Federation bias. What repels you about the Empire? And what is it about the Federation that you admire so much?*

*Growing up in Federal space made me biased, I guess. Though, I've always believed in giving people a second chance, and I have met some really nice Imperial people. I often help out the Sovereignty (the ex-Imperial Inquisition). I designed their logo too. They're decent people behind that patriotism.*

*I don't know what it is about the Federation that attracts me so much. I've always loved military-style ships, you know—tanky, gruff looking ones. That's not to say I don't do my part for the Empire though—I have helped them construct ships, starports, you name it. I even own my very own Clipper and Cutter, gifted by Mavia Kain down in Brestla for helping them stave off an attacking faction in their home system.*

*Do I hate the Empire? No, especially with the Thargoids on their way. I respect them a lot more now than any time. We need to put aside our differences and join together, not squabble like children over who has the best navy. My time out in the unknown has had me bump into many Imperial pilots. Once you're out the Bubble, you and your enemy are the same—human.*

A mature attitude. What's your opinion of President Hudson?

*Ahh Hudson, how can you hate the guy? Filling the shoes of Halsey quite well I think. He's exactly what the Federation and humanity needs—down to Earth. You see people out there trying to claim the Thargoids are friendly. Let me tell you, I've seen those things up close—they aren't friendly.*

*Of course, there will always be conspiracies—that's what makes the human race so great; we're so uniquely minded. Of course there will be people who disagree with me, and power to them. I know I could be wrong about him, and I'm willing to hold my hands up and admit it if so. But so far I like his approach to the Pleiades conflict; fight fire with fire.*

Fair enough. What do you hope viewers will think or feel when they see your work?

*My work isn't just a hobby to me anymore, it's my life. I just want to share the pleasure of a nicely designed piece of artwork with the Galaxy. As for the Federal patriotism, that's a tough question to answer. Some people see patriotism as a negative thing, some see it as an act of unity. Being the optimist I am, I like to think patriotism makes people stronger.*


*I keep mentioning Thargoids, but they're one of the best examples of when patriotism becomes a powerful weapon. If everyone didn't want to fight for a cause, we'd be dead already. Again, like I said before, I admire the Empire for the same reason—their patriotism most of the time even exceeds the Federation's. And because of those 'Goids,*

*I hope soon we won't even refer to it as "Federal/Imperial patriotism" and, rather, 'human patriotism'.*

Yes, that makes perfect sense.

Ok. So what's next for Cmdr 2596? Presumably you'll be involved with the Thargoid resistance?

*The exploration bug is biting—I want to get back out there more than anything! But yes. You will see me out there shooting the Thargoids to ensure the evacuation effort runs smoothly.*

Thanks for talking to us. Now get back to your desk! 



Meet the Team - Mat2596

Interviewed by: Souvarine

Page design: Zaclobsterboy

EXPLORERS!

ARGH!

DID YOU PACK YOUR  
HEAT SINKS?



PILOTS FEDERATION

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## BUCKYBALL RACING CLUB

[www.buckyballracing.org.uk](http://www.buckyballracing.org.uk)



## BROADCAST COBRA

**Community news, real stories, talk shows, and much more...**

[www.broadcastcobra.com](http://www.broadcastcobra.com)  
<https://discord.gg/vmxVnpC>

## OPERATION IDA

Repairing our foundation



Humanitarian relief operations to repair starports attacked by Thargoids in the Pleiades

Join us:  
<https://discord.gg/wYjFrDM>



Does the idea of driving an SRV all the way around a planet or moon fill you with an inexplicable yet strangely compelling sense of adventure and purpose? If so then fear not, you're not alone.

**Contact the Planetary Circumnavigation Club and fulfil your dreams!**

<https://tinyurl.com/planetarycircumnavigationclub>  
*No time wasters!*

### Vacancies available in out of town location (Colonia)

Dynamic, industrious and adventurous team players wanted to become part of an established team. We are a dedicated band of commanders that are out there to have fun and expand the boundaries of our faction. Sense of humour is essential as is a willingness to get involved in things. No previous skills required as all training can and will be given. The successful applicants must enjoy travel and working with others. Relocation grants not available and applicants must provide their own vehicle.

Facilities include off road parking and access to the exclusive Phoenix Harbour Country Club with its amazing views of the Colonia Nebula. We have our own onsite dedicated sanitation engineers. Free accommodation in the awesome Phoenix Towers. Competitive rates available for completing missions and killing bad guys.

Colonia Citizens Network would love to have you come join us and become part of our faction in Centralis, Colonia. If you are interested and feel you fit the criteria head along to our website at [www.elite-ccn.com](http://www.elite-ccn.com) to find out more and apply.

**Be part of the heart of Colonia.**

## PERSONAL

**IT WAS WRITTEN:** Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense. ..." The Sons of Job say Curse this Orb.

**DR. WHIZZO'S JOKES** and circus outfitter's. For the third year running we've won the Empire's Best Clown Shoes competition. No small feat. Babcock Hub, Baal.

Wings, Trades, RPGs and Bounties Boards. Essential tool for socially-minded pilots. <https://www.edwtrb.com/>

**FOR SALE - Anaconda.** Fully A rated, engineered with 65 light year range. 10,000 light years on the clock. 50 credits. Husband ran off with secretary, told me to sell the Conda and send him every credit I get for it.

**GENDREW - THAT'S THE TROUBLE.** You burned our house down with all our stuff in it, you maniac - Gladwyn

**LARGE BUGBLATTER BEAST** for sale. Eats anything. Especially fond of children. Adams Dock, Traal

**MY DBX GETS** me where I need, when I need.

**DESPERATE AND TIRED.** Looking for passage to Pegasi Region. DJ Nanite has found my shipment of Fesh but to pick it up I've got to be there by the 21st. Please Help!

**MAD KEITH'S LAUNDRY.** We won't tear your Remlok suit using machinery. We promise to do it by hand. Mad Keith, MacLean Hub, Lugh

**TRY THE FAMOUS Jameson** Orbital Elite Pie Shop. You'll never get better!

**ETIDORS WATNED - Erevate** Free Press, CleverHub, Eravata

**THIS EASTER,** remember to visit your place of worship and lay an egg on the altar

**LOOKING TO LOCATE** Commander Validating. So impressed by the amount of exploring you do. You must have amazing stamina. Honey, call me - you can scan THIS planetary body anytime x - Ask for Two-Ton Tessie, Teng-hui Landing, Colanja

**MAWURU SURPLUS SHIPYARDS -** Nearly new, recovered and refurbished ships for every occasion.

**FOR YOUR CLOSEST SHAVE YET,** only Gillette Apex Extremis gives you 18 blades of raw comfort.

**LOOKING FOR SOMEONE** to hang around with. Anyone. Have a lot of original ideas. Enjoy whining, dining. Commander Olobrains, c/o Friends of Jaques, Colonia

**HAULERS WANTED, LHS 3447.** Must have clean pilot's licence and criminal record

**NEW RESORT OPENING** soon on Anurinjung 1. Free tickets to the first 100 responders able to spend 4-5 May 3304 there and give honest review. Arachnophobes are not advised to reply.

**NEW PERSPECTIVES** on an old Universe. Worn out Imperial Commander with new insights into the way of the world seeks similar converts to review the past and prepare for a different future. No anarchists (yet). Sorry.

**CATASTROPHE ON LEGS?** Have you spent your life feeling one below the limit? Never quite made it to top credits, never got the right amount of street cred with the people who really count? Write to me and we'll make it different.

**COURSES IN MIRACLES?** Read the Book? Seen the Vid? Had the Dream? Now meet the being who can make it all happen for you. Active, vibrant, alive and aware seeking spiritually balanced soulmate to see the reality in the Universe.

**ADVENTUROUS EXPLORER** seeks 2-3 companions for adventures in newly rediscovered 'lost' colony. Applicants must be willing to leave in May, share of credit for any discoveries and reasonable pay included. Own survival gear preferred. Imperials only.

**CYBERNETICS EXPERT?** I'm a 50-year-young Model 8 upgrade with some faulty wiring that needs a special tweak, if you know what I mean contact BH-884 at Quimby Horizons, Sosolingati

**OISIR? TALMORE?** Know what I mean? If yes contact me on exchange BB2-4DG immediately, I have a hot lead, need a ship. Bring 2xSAP-8. 45ly range Essential. Holdstock Market, LHS 3921.

**AFTER CENTURIES** of computer simulations, a team of scientists on Earth are proud to announce that they finally know what she looks like with a chimney on her.

**IMPERIAL PRINCE** seeking Federal Commander to transfer 96,651,005 Cr out of the Empire. Do to quirk of dates my Cousin is unable to help me and I require your help to free me from this terrible society. Send 100,000 Cr via Western Union for transfer fee. Will split fortune.

**SEEKING INFORMATION** on the Veliaz system. No information found in public databases, if you find it contact me immediately.

You can trust the law to protect your assets.  
Or you can get insurance.



**BANK OF ZAONCE**